



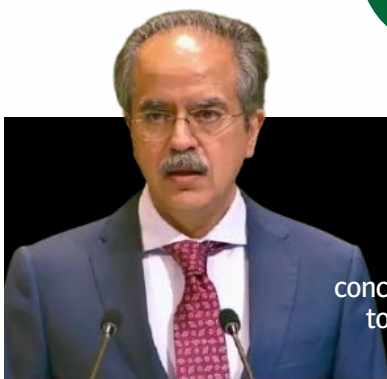
Daily The Spokesman

A Leading National Daily



فرمان رسول ﷺ
جی کریم ﷺ نے فرمایا: ستوں پر بیٹھنے سے بچو!
صحابہ نے عرض کیا: یا رسول اللہ! ہماری یہ مجالس
قہر تھری ہیں، ہمیں دوزخ و عذاب کا شکار نہ
ہو۔ آپ ﷺ نے فرمایا: اگر چھادب تم ان مجلسوں
میں بیٹھنا چاہتے ہو تو اسے حق ادا کیا کرو، یعنی راستے
کو اس کا حق دو۔ صحابہ نے عرض کیا: راستے کا حق کیا
ہے یا رسول اللہ! فرمایا: (خیر) عرم عورقوں کو دیکھتے
(سے) نظریں نہ اٹھاؤ، کیونکہ وہیں کوہستان اسلام کا خواب
دیکھنا ہے۔ (صحیح بخاری، کتاب الریاء، ص ۱۰۷)

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Pakistan urges renewed commitment to South Sudan peace process, emphasizes fair election

"Elections remain an important element in bringing the transition to a legitimate conclusion," Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmad, permanent representative of Pakistan to the UN, told the UN Security Council on Thursday, noting that the political, legal, security and financial requirements necessary to hold them remain outstanding.



PIA expands capacity to facilitate students, expats returning to China after summer break

PIA is operating additional services between Islamabad and Beijing to accommodate the increased travel demand from students, professionals, and overseas Pakistanis returning to China after the summer vacation. Passengers can travel on the upcoming flights scheduled for August 21 and 28 and September 4 and 11, with special reduced fares now available on the Islamabad-Beijing-Islamabad route, according to sources here on Friday.

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Makkah Joint Defence Agreement

MAKKAH: Prime Minister of Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, Crown Prince and Prime Minister of Saudi Arabia, Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, President of the Republic of Türkiye, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Chief of Defence Forces (CDF) and Chief of the Army Staff Field Marshal Asim Munir posing a group photo after signed the Makkah Joint Defence Agreement.



Photo: PID

Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Turkiye sign Makkah Joint Defence Agreement

Spokesman Report

MAKKAH AL-MUKAR-RAMAH: Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Turkiye on Friday signed the Makkah Joint Defence Agreement, committing to enhanced collective security, expanded defence cooperation and closer strategic coordination amid heightened regional tensions.

The agreement was signed during the Makkah Al-Mukar-

ramah Summit for Joint Defence at Al-Safa Palace, attended by Saudi Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammed bin Salman, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, and Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, who visited the Kingdom at the invitation of King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud.

The pact is intended to strengthen collective deterrence against any act of aggression,

stipulating that an armed attack against any one of the three countries would be regarded as an attack against them all. It also provides for enhanced defence cooperation across multiple domains among the three states.

A Foreign Office statement said the agreement was guided by longstanding historical ties, Islamic solidarity, and shared strategic interests among the three nations, reflecting their commitment to strength-

ening collective security and promoting regional and global peace and stability.

The deal follows nearly a year of negotiations, and negotiations began soon after the October 2023 Hamas attack on Israel, gaining pace amid the US and Israel's war on Iran. The agreement builds on Pakistan's existing Strategic Mutual Defence Agreement with Saudi Arabia signed last year, under which Pakistan has

deployed military personnel and aircraft to the Kingdom for joint training and defence cooperation.

The alliance unites a major oil exporter, a NATO member and a nuclear-armed power, with analysts describing it as a pact that could reshape the region's security architecture. Prior to the signing, the three leaders reviewed bilateral relations and discussed issues of mutual interest.

Honoured to sign Makkah Joint Defence agreement: PM

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif said he was honoured to sign the Makkah Joint Defence Agreement alongside Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

In a post on X, he said, "Three brotherly nations are united by faith, friendship and a shared resolve for peace and security."

"May this historic pact, signed in the shadow of the Haramain, remain a shield of peace for generations to come and may it bring prosperity for our three brotherly countries as well as for the Ummah."



"I would especially like to express my deep appreciation for Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir whose untiring efforts and utmost dedication contributed immensely towards this great cause," he added.

Security forces killed 10 militants in two clashes in KP



City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Ten militants were killed in two separate clashes with security forces in Pakistan's northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province on Thursday, according to ISPR.

In the first clash, militants attempted to attack security force checkpoints in the Azam Warsak area of South Waziristan district, but the attack was thwarted. Eight militants were killed in the ensuing exchange of fire.

In a separate clash in Dir district, security forces killed two more militants, according to the military.

Weapons and ammunition were recovered from the militants, who the military said had been involved in terrorist activities in the area.

Sanitisation operations were underway to search for any remaining militants, the military said, adding that counter-terrorism operations under the government's "Azam-e-Istehkam" initiative would continue.

Karachi Edhi centre robbed of Rs6.5 million by armed men

Bureau Report

KARACHI: Four armed robbers raided an Edhi Centre in Sohrah Goth on Friday and fled with Rs6.5 million in cash that had been brought from a bank to pay the salaries of more than 200 employees.

According to Edhi spokesperson Mohammad Amin, the robbers, wearing helmets and concealing their faces, entered the centre when staff arrived with the cash and held employees



hostage before fleeing with the money. Police were informed of the robbery

and have launched an investigation.

CCTV footage obtained showed four armed men carrying out the robbery. The suspects could be seen with their faces covered.

Police are reviewing the footage to identify and arrest the suspects.

Sindh Home Minister Ziaul Hassan Lanjar took notice of the incident and directed authorities to intensify efforts to apprehend the robbers.

NAB Recovered Rs16.09 trillion over 36 years, Senate Committee Told

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD:

The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) recovered Rs16,093 billion between 1991 and June 2026, officials informed the Senate Standing Committee on Law and Justice during a briefing on the bureau's 36-year performance. Chaired by Senator Farooq H. Naek, the committee was told that NAB examined 505,799 complaints, conducted 121,147 inquiries, completed 7,339 investigations and filed 4,105 references during the period.

Officials said NAB operated with a budget of about Rs22.5 billion over the past five and a half years. The bureau's chairman maintained that NAB remained the country's leading recovery institution despite limited financial resources.

NAB Director General Operations highlighted challenges arising from the transfer of cases between 2022 and 2024 and clarified that the bureau does not investigate alleged embezzlement cases involving less than Rs500 million.

Senator Farooq H. Naek called for legal action against those filing false complaints, saying they undermine public confidence. The NAB chairman also proposed a high-level committee involving the FBR, SECP and Competition Commission, claiming Pakistan's oil and electricity issues could be addressed within four months through practical reforms.



Bilawal calls for public consent on new provinces, demands transparent AJK elections

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has said that the creation of new provinces and administrative units should be based on public consent rather than decisions made behind closed doors. Addressing an election rally in Bagh, he said the PPP supports the formation of new provinces wherever there is public backing and political consensus. He reiterated support for a separate South Punjab province and granting provisional provincial status



to Gilgit-Baltistan.

Bilawal also commented on federal politics, alleging that internal divisions within the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) were creating diffi-

culties for Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, although he expressed confidence in the prime minister's intentions.

Expressing concern over the situation in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), Bilawal urged dialogue to restore normalcy and criticized the phased election process, alleging it could facilitate rigging. He called for free, fair and transparent elections, saying Kashmiris should decide their own future. He also urged the implementation of the proposed Truth Commission to address political concerns in AJK.

AJK Election Commission Postpones Polling in Poonch and Plandri Due to Law and Order Situation.

Bureau Report

MUZAFFARABAD: The Azad Jammu and Kashmir Election Commission has decided to postpone polling in the electoral constituencies of District Poonch and District Plandri, which was scheduled to be held on 10 August, in view of the prevailing law and order situation.

According to the Spokesperson of the Election Commission, polling in the constituencies of District Poonch and District Plandri will not take place on 10 August. However, polling in three constituencies of District Bagh and one constituency of District Haveli will be conducted as scheduled on 10 August.



The decision to postpone the elections was taken in light of concerns regarding the law and order situation, as well as requests submitted to the Election Commission by certain political leaders and election candidates.

The Election Commission further stated that the revised election schedule, including the new polling date for the affected constituencies, will be announced after a comprehensive review of the prevailing situation and all relevant considerations. The spokesperson emphasized that the decision has been taken solely to ensure that the electoral process is conducted in a free, fair, transparent, and peaceful environment.

PML-N to Form Strong AJK Government, Deliver New Development Era: Shah Ghulam Qadir

Bureau Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Muslim League (N) Azad Jammu and Kashmir President Shah Ghulam Qadir has expressed confidence that the party will soon form a strong government in Azad Jammu and Kashmir under the leadership of Nawaz Sharif, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif. Addressing party office-bearers and workers in Islamabad, he said the PML-N's electoral success reflected the people's trust in the party and would pave the way for a new era of development and prosperity in AJK.

Qadir said the party's previous development projects in the region demonstrated its commitment to public welfare and pledged to continue resolving people's issues at their doorstep. He urged party workers to maintain peace and public order, particularly in the Poonch Division, ahead of polling on August 10.

Rejecting the Pakistan Peoples Party's allegations of election irregularities, he maintained that polling in the Mirpur and Muzaffarabad divisions and refugee constituencies was free, fair and transparent. He expressed confidence that the PML-N would secure a clean sweep in Poonch and urged the PPP to focus on governance issues in Sindh instead of criticising the party.

Public holiday announced in District Bagh and Haveli (Kahuta) for AJK General Elections 2026

Bureau Report

MUZAFFARABAD: The Government of Azad Jammu and Kashmir has declared 10 August 2026 as a public holiday in District Bagh and District Haveli (Kahuta) in connection with the AJK General Elections 2026.

A formal notification to this effect has been issued by the Services and General Administration Department (S&GAD).

The public holiday has been announced to facilitate voters and ensure their maximum participation in the electoral process.

Experts Stress Research and Scholarship to Strengthen Pakistan's Kashmir Narrative

City Desk



ISLAMABAD: Experts at a seminar hosted by the Institute of Regional Studies (IRS) titled "IOJK after 5th August, 2019: Seven Years of Revocation and Resistance" emphasized that serious scholarship and research are essential for building an effective narrative on Kashmir and supporting informed policymaking. The discussion focused on BAANG, a book by imprisoned Kashmiri political leader Dr. Qasim Fakto, which panelists said anticipated the 2019 constitutional changes in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) and highlighted concerns over demographic changes.

Former AJK President Ambassador Masood Khan termed India's August 5, 2019 actions a violation of international law and called for stronger national and grassroots efforts on Kashmir. Mushaal Hussain Mullick urged youth, media and academia to counter misinformation, while Lt. Gen. (R) Asif Yasin Malik stressed credible scholarship to support Pakistan's position. Senator Dr. Zarqa Suharwardi Taimur and Dr. Mujahid Gillani highlighted the importance of diplomacy, research and documentation. IRS President Ambassador Jauhar Saleem concluded that perseverance, unity and hope would sustain the Kashmiri people's aspirations.

Traders, Transporters Demand Relief Amid Rising Inflation and Fuel Costs

Asim Tanveer

MULTAN: Traders and transporters in Multan and South Punjab are facing mounting financial pressure due to rising inflation, high electricity tariffs, increasing taxes, declining purchasing power and soaring fuel prices, said Rana Muhammad Asghar, President of the Anjuman Tajiran General Bus Stand and the All Pakistan Public Transport Owners Federation South Punjab. He warned that goods transporters were preparing to strike, while public transport operators were struggling to continue services because of escalating operational costs. Asghar urged the government to reduce electricity and petroleum prices, simplify the tax system for small traders, abolish unnecessary fees and introduce a one-window inspection system. He also highlighted poor sanitation, sewerage, damaged roads, traffic congestion and inadequate parking facilities in Multan's markets, calling for traders' involvement in infrastructure planning. He demanded special relief packages for traders and transporters in South Punjab, saying resolving their problems would boost business, improve supplies, create jobs and strengthen the economy, while warning protests could intensify if issues remained unresolved.

Karachi approves Pakistan-Romania Friendship Monument to celebrate bilateral ties

Bureau Report

KARACHI: The Commissioner Karachi has formally handed over approval for the construction of the Pakistan-Romania Friendship Monument to the Pakistan Romania Business Council (PRBC), marking a major step in strengthening cultural diplomacy between the two countries. The monument, approved for installation at the intersection of Dr. Mehmood Hussain Road and Shahrah-e-Faisal, will commemorate more than six decades of diplomatic relations between Pakistan and Romania.

The project, envisioned by Romanian Ambassador Dr. Dan Stoenescu, aims to symbolize the enduring friendship and growing cooperation between the two nations in trade, culture, education, local governance and people-to-people exchanges. PRBC Chairman Sohail Shamim Firpo and Advisor and COO Atif Farooqi welcomed the approval and pledged to work closely with civic authorities to ensure the monument reflects the historical and cultural ties between the countries.

PRBC also thanked Commissioner Karachi and Assistant Commissioner HQ Iqra Jannat for facilitating the approval process. The council will oversee the monument's construction and maintenance. Meanwhile, the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation will consider naming a road "Constanta Avenue" or "Constanta Road" in a forthcoming council meeting.

Protest

FAISALABAD: Activists of Jamaat-e-Islami stage a sit-in against petroleum levy and inflation at PMC Hostel Gate.



Photo: Online

AKU Launches Free Digital Pediatrics Manual to Improve Child Health Care in Pakistan

Bureau Report

KARACHI: The Aga Khan University (AKU) has launched the AKU Manual of Pediatrics, a free digital clinical resource designed to strengthen child health care in Pakistan through evidence-based guidance for health-care professionals. Developed by AKU's Department of Paediatrics and Child Health and the Centre for Clinical Best Practices, the manual features 88 clinical practice guidelines across 14 pediatric subspecialties and is available through the AKU website and mobile application. The launch ceremony was attended by Federal Health Minister Syed Mustafa Kamal, who praised the initiative as an important step toward improving the quality and consistency of pediatric care. AKU President Dr. Sulaiman Shahabuddin said the manual combines global scientific evidence



with Pakistan's local healthcare needs to support better clinical decisions. Chair of Paediatrics Prof. Dr. Fyezah

Jehan said the resource bridges the gap between international evidence and local practice. The manual aims

to enhance diagnosis, treatment and health outcomes for children across Pakistan.

Media Workers Organisation marks anniversary with grand ceremony in Lahore

Bureau Report

LAHORE: The Media Workers Organisation (MWO) celebrated its anniversary with a prestigious ceremony at the Punjabi Adabi Baithak, Gaddafi Stadium, Lahore, under the chairmanship of MWO Punjab President Naseeb Ali Tabassum. The event brought together a large number of journalists, political leaders, social activists, literary personalities, cultural figures and media workers from across Punjab.

Addressing the gathering, ANP Punjab General Secretary Ameer Bahadur Khan Hoti, Pakistan Peoples Party Central Punjab Information Secre-

tary Shahzad Saeed Cheema, senior journalist Isar Rana, PPP Lahore President Faisal Mir, Hina Siddiqui, Hina Jutt, Al-Falah Schools Pakistan CEO Aurangzeb Khan, Azam Karamat Khokhar, Amina Bhatti, Rana Musawir and Lala Bashir Rehmani paid tribute to the contributions of media workers. They stressed the need for collective efforts to safeguard the rights, welfare and professional security of journalists and media professionals.

The ceremony also featured vibrant cultural performances by renowned singer Megha, poet Arooj Durrani, poets Amjad Iqbal Amjad and Sajjad Bari, and singers Sheeza Jahan, Ameen Raja,

Sonia Pari, Sehr Fatima and Maliha Fatima, who received warm appreciation from the audience.

At the conclusion of the event, commemorative shields were presented to distinguished guests, journalists and media workers in recognition of their services.

Among those in attendance were Pakistan Federal Union of Columnists President and columnist Abdul Majid Malik, MWO Punjab General Secretary Adil Javed Chaudhry, Media Workers Welfare Foundation General Secretary Rana Babar Masood Khan, MWO Punjab Vice President Ejaz-ul-Hassan, MWO Rawalpindi Group Leader Saqib

Shah, MWO Punjab Information Secretary Adnan Lodhi, MWO Multan General Secretary Fayyaz Qadri, MWO Bahawalpur Executive Member Zafar Anzar, APNC Central Vice Chairman Asim Latif Chaudhry, along with media workers and personalities from various walks of life across the province.

Speaking on the occasion, MWO Punjab President Naseeb Ali Tabassum reaffirmed the organisation's commitment to protecting the rights, welfare and professional interests of media workers. He said the organisation would continue to raise the voice of every media worker at all available forums and work tirelessly for their betterment.



Islamabad

30° – 38° Clear

SERVICES

Namaz Timings

Fajr 3:51 am
Zohr 12:14 pm
Asr 5:03 pm
Maghrib 7:03 pm
Isha 8:36 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

ENQUIRY

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

HOSPITALS

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

DEPARTMENTS

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

COMPLAINTS

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

Worker Receives Rs2.45m Insurance Cheque After Factory Accident

Zafar Chushti

TOBA TEK SINGH: A worker who lost his hand in a workplace accident has received an insurance cheque worth Rs2.45 million with support from the district administration and Labour Department. Assistant Director Labour Welfare Toba Tek Singh Chaudhry Qamar Abbas Warraich said the department was taking effective measures to protect workers' rights and ensure their welfare.

Ali Hassan, an employee of Arctic Textile Mills (Spinning Unit-II) on Shorkot Road, suffered the serious workplace accident when his hand became trapped in a machine several months ago. Following the incident, Deputy Commissioner Maham Asif Malik issued special directives for his assistance.

On the directives, the insurance claim cheque was handed over to Ali Hassan. He was also reappointed by the mill, enabling him to continue earning a livelihood for his family.

Receiving the cheque, Ali Hassan thanked the deputy commissioner and appreciated the Punjab government's worker-friendly policies. Labour officials and mill representatives reaffirmed their commitment to workplace safety, workers' rights and timely welfare support.

JI Stages Faisalabad Sit-in Against Petroleum Levy, Demands Fuel Price Cut

Abdul Majid

FAISALABAD: Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) workers staged a sit-in on Sargodha Road in Faisalabad as part of a nationwide protest against rising petroleum prices and the petroleum levy tax on the call of JI chief Hafiz Naeem-ur-Rehman. The demonstration was led by

JI Punjab General Secretary Dr. Babar Rashid, District Ameer Mehboob-ul-Zaman Butt, Rana Sikandar Azam, Mian Anwar-ul-Haq, Mian Tahir Ayub, trader leader Sohail Niaz Toor, Ajmal Badr, Afzal Shaheen, Chaudhry Muhammad Saleem and other party leaders.

Addressing the protesters, Dr. Babar Rashid said similar sit-ins were held at

more than 500 locations across Pakistan to send a strong message that the public rejects what he termed the "cruel" petroleum levy imposed under IMF pressure. He claimed public frustration had reached a tipping point and warned that the people would hold the government accountable for economic hardships.

The JI leader demanded that the

government immediately reduce the petrol price to Rs225 per litre and maintain that ceiling for the next two years, arguing that such a move would support economic recovery. He further claimed that abolishing the petroleum levy could lower petrol prices to below Rs200 per litre.

Dr. Rashid also urged the govern-

ment to reject IMF pressure, abolish the petroleum levy, review expensive agreements with independent power producers (IPPs), reduce load-shedding, cut unnecessary government expenditures, and restore food prices to pre-Iran-US war levels. Protesters also offered Maghrib prayers in congregation at the sit-in venue before concluding the demonstration.



Book launching ceremony

ISLAMABAD: Former President Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), Sardar Masood Khan, addressing the launching ceremony of prominent intellectual Hassan Akhtar Gardezi's book 'Masnavi-e Peer Changi' organized by Pakistan Cultural Forum at Idara-i-Farogh-i-Qaumi Zaban (IFQZ).



Photo: Online by Sultan Bashir

Jamaat-e-Islami Holds Women's Rally Against Fuel Prices, Levy Tax in Faisalabad

Abdul Majid

FAISALABAD: Jamaat-e-Islami leaders and women workers staged a protest rally in Faisalabad against rising petroleum prices and the levy tax, calling on the public to join nationwide demonstrations. Addressing the rally, Provincial Ameer Javed Qasuri said a country-wide protest would be held on August 7 on the call of Jamaat-e-Islami chief Hafiz Naeem-ur-Rehman, with demonstrations planned at highways and major intersections to demand economic relief.

The rally, led by District Nazima Sadiya Rehman and other women leaders, was also attended by children. Qasuri



criticized increasing fuel prices, taxes and production costs, saying the public could no longer bear the economic burden. He urged the government and economic policy-

makers to prioritize public welfare over external pressures and revise policies affecting ordinary citizens. He stressed the need to create employment opportunities, support agri-

culture, trade and industry, and reduce dependence on foreign loans. He expressed confidence that public protests would compel the government to withdraw the levy tax.

Maryam Iftikhar Excels in Multan Board Matric Exams with 1,148 Marks

Iram Asim

MULTAN: Maryam Iftikhar, daughter of APP News Agency Multan Station Manager and senior journalist Qazi Ifikhar Ahmed and senior journalist Humaira Shafiq, achieved outstanding success in the 2026 Multan Board Matriculation Examination by securing 1,148 out of 1,200 marks and earning second position in her private school. Expressing gratitude to Allah Almighty, she attributed her achievement to her hard work, the prayers of her parents and the guidance of her teachers. Maryam advised students to remain dedicated to their studies, offer regular prayers and avoid wasting time on mobile phones to achieve success. She expressed her ambition to pursue higher education, qualify for CSS and serve the nation. The Multan Press Club Association, journalists and media organizations congratulated Maryam and her family, wishing her continued success in the future.



CPO Faisalabad's Swift Action Rescues Transgender Violence Victim, Ensuring Safety and Justice

Abdul Majid

FAISALABAD: On special notice of CPO Faisalabad Tanveer Hussain, the Protection Center of Faisalabad Police immediately rescued a transgender victim of violence, provided medical assistance and provided him with complete medical treatment.

On the request of the victim, a case has been registered against the named accused and legal action has been initiated, while steps are also being taken to arrest the accused.

Under the supervision of Sana Bilal, in-charge of the Protection Center Faisalabad, the victim is being provided with a safe environment, continuous care, psychological and moral support and all possible facilities so that he feels safe and confident.

Faisalabad Police reiterates its commitment that ensuring the protection of the life, property and honor of every citizen, including women, children and transgender persons, is its top priority, and all possible legal assistance will be continued until justice is provided to the victim.



Hyderabad Reviews Independence Day Preparations, Orders Cleanliness and Decoration

Abdul Ghafoor Sarohi



HYDERABAD: A meeting was held at the Deputy Commissioner Complex to review preparations for Independence Day celebrations on August 14. The meeting, chaired by Additional Deputy Commissioner-II Mehwish Barro on the directives of Deputy Commissioner Hyderabad, was attended by officials from the Health, Education, Police and Information departments, Hyderabad Municipal Corporation, Sindh Solid Waste Management Board and other relevant agencies.

The meeting reviewed security, cleanliness, decoration of government buildings and other arrangements for the national day celebrations. Mehwish Barro directed officials to ensure special cleanliness drives at union councils, towns, schools and other public places ahead of August 14.

She also ordered the replacement of national flags at all government offices and directed authorities to decorate public buildings with green lights and national flags. Government institutions were instructed to organize flag-hoisting ceremonies, cake-cutting events and other dignified programmes.

She directed all departments to complete preparations within the stipulated timeframe and maintain close coordination to ensure the celebrations were held with national spirit and enthusiasm.

SHINE Humanity Trains Teachers to Strengthen School Health Education in Sindh

Commerce Desk

KARACHI: SHINE Humanity, under its Healthy Schools Initiative, organized a three-day training programme for 20 government school teachers from Government Boys Primary Cluster School and Government Girls Cluster School in Gharo, District Thatta. The participants included 11 male and nine female teachers. The pilot initiative aims to improve the health and wellbeing of students in rural communities by promoting awareness of hygiene, nutrition, disease prevention, and healthy life-



styles. During the training, teachers received practical instruction on water, sani-

tation and hygiene (WASH), first aid, nutrition, menstrual health management, mental wellbeing, child protection, life skills, substance abuse prevention, and community engagement.

They were also guided on establishing Health Clubs and preparing school action plans. SHINE Humanity CEO Fahem Khan said empowering teachers with health knowledge would help create healthier schools and encourage lifelong healthy habits among children, their families, and communities.

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From Paper Flags to Digital Feeds: How Pakistan’s Youth Reimagine Independence Day

Long before smartphones dominated daily life, August in Pakistan meant a different kind of energy. Young volunteers went door to door across neighbourhoods, notebook and pen in hand, collecting small contributions over cups of green tea from neighbours. The pooled funds transformed streets into displays of green-and-white flags, paper bunting and fairy lights, marking Independence Day through collective, hands-on effort.

Today, that same spirit finds expression through very different tools. High-definition videos, graphic designs, coordinated social media campaigns, customised green-and-white vehicles, patriotic fashion, and cinematic vlogs have become the new language of celebration. Where paper bunting once fluttered between rooftops, digital banners now trend across social media feeds — the medium has changed, but the emotion underneath remains constant.

Muhammad Yasir, a government school teacher with two decades of experience, remembers school grounds buzzing with activity weeks before August 14, as students crafted paper flags and rehearsed national songs. “The tools have changed, but their love for the country has not,” he said, reflecting on how young people have adapted their expressions of patriotism over time.

Historians note that this digital shift echoes a much older pattern. During the Pakistan Movement, students, writers and activists relied on the media of their era — newspapers, pamphlets, poetry and public rallies — to mobilise support for a separate homeland. Today’s youth are carrying that legacy forward, simply through different platforms.

For 22-year-old content creator Aaniat Khalid, Independence Day is an opportunity to tell Pakistan’s story to a global audience through patriotic videos and digital storytelling. Similarly, 20-year-old digital artist Aafaq Ahmad now begins his celebrations not with buying string and paper flags, but with designing motion graphics and digital posters. “Every generation leaves its own mark on how it expresses love for the homeland,” he said.

The shift has also created economic opportunity, with many young entrepreneurs — particularly women — using social media to sell patriotic jewellery, customised badges, digital artwork and themed clothing, blending patriotism with entrepreneurship.

Social analyst Adnan Aamir describes this transformation as natural evolution rather than a loss of tradition. “The essence of Independence Day lies in civic awareness, gratitude for history and a shared sense of belonging,” he said, noting that whether expressed through a decorated street or a viral video, the message of national pride remains timeless.

From neighbourhood streets to social media feeds, Pakistan’s youth continue honouring the Quaid-e-Azam’s vision — proving that while the platforms of celebration evolve, the spirit of independence endures unchanged.

Stop Calling It Brain Drain: It’s a Rational Exit From a Broken System

Manahil Shaukat

By the government’s own count, roughly 687,000 Pakistanis had gone abroad for work by November of 2025, part of a fiscal year total above 727,000. That is not an abstraction. That is engineers, nurses, accountants, IT specialists, and teachers walking through departure gates with one-way tickets, leaving behind classrooms they trained in, hospitals they staffed, and offices they built.

We call this “brain drain,” and the phrase does more damage than we admit. Drain implies a passive process, water finding its way downhill because gravity leaves it no choice. It lets the country mourn a tragedy instead of confronting a verdict. It lets officials issue statements of concern instead of asking why staying became the losing bet. What is happening in Pakistan is not seepage. It is exit, deliberate and calculated, by people who compared what the country offers against what leaving offers and chose accordingly.

“Call it what it actually is: a referendum on the state, conducted one visa application at a time.”

The trajectory shows a clear trend. Around 288,000 people left Pakistan in 2021. This number increased to more than 832,000 in 2022 and over 862,000 in 2023 and has held near three quarters of a million a year since. At the same time, Pakistan unemployment rate risen to 7.1 percent the highest in 21 years. Unemployment has increased among people of all ages, for both men and women and in every part of the country. In a widely cited PIDE survey, 37 percent of Pakistanis, more than one in three, said they want to leave the country. That is not a fringe sentiment confined to the desperate. It is close to becoming the national median.

Migration used to be mostly about unskilled labour heading to the Gulf. That has changed. A growing share of the outflow now comes from information technology, medicine, engineering, and accounting, sectors that were supposed to be Pakistan’s future. For many IT professionals money is not the only reason for moving abroad. The reasons include limited support for research and innovation, fewer chances to grow in their career and unclear government policies that make it difficult to build a successful future in Pakistan. High inflation, low salaries and a system where connections often matter more than talent also encourage skilled people to seek better opportunities in other countries. Leaving is not a betrayal of the country. It is a rational response to what the country has become.

Islamabad has found a way to feel less alarmed about all of this: remittances. Overseas Pakistanis sent home more than 38 billion dollars in the fiscal year ending mid-2025, a lifeline for foreign exchange reserves and struggling households alike. But remittances are a symptom being mistaken for a cure. The country is gaining cash and losing capacity, trading the doctors who could have modernised its hospitals and the engineers who could have built its industry for a wire transfer. A nation cannot remit its way to development. It

can only borrow time.

Reversing this exit does not require slogans about patriotism. It requires making the equation different. That means predictable regulation instead of policy that shifts with every finance minister. It means investing in research and innovation so skilled professionals have something to build here, not just something to escape. It means a justice system and a bureaucracy where outcomes depend on merit rather than who you know. It means wage and tax structures that do not punish the people the economy most needs to keep. None of this is exotic policy. Other countries that stopped their own exodus did exactly this, and did it consistently, for years, regardless of who was in office.

Pakistan keeps asking how to stop brain drain, as though the people leaving are the problem. They are not. They are the symptom, and an unusually well-informed one. Every departing flight is a data point, gathered by people who had every reason to want to stay and concluded, individually and in growing numbers, that they could not afford. A country cannot stop people from leaving by making them feel guilty or by only celebrating the money they send home. It can stop them by becoming a place where people want to live and build their future, not a place they feel they must leave.

Until that changes, calling it “brain drain” hides the real problem. Pakistan is not losing its talented people by chance. It is losing them because of broken promises, poor opportunities, and problems that have been ignored for too long.

The writer is student of National Defence University, Islamabad

Punjab Powers Women’s Mobility

Rabia Nawaz

In a major step towards women’s empowerment and sustainable mobility, the Punjab Government has launched the CM Punjab E-Scooty Scheme for Women under the leadership of Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif. The initiative aims to provide eligible women with electric scooters, helping them overcome transportation challenges that often limit access to education, employment, healthcare, and economic opportunities.

Mobility remains one of the biggest barriers to women’s participation in public life. Across Punjab, thousands of female students and working professionals rely on overcrowded, unreliable, and often unsafe public transport. Long commuting hours, rising fuel costs, and limited transport services particularly affect women living in suburban and rural areas, forcing many to abandon educational or career aspirations.

Speaking about the initiative, Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif said that empowering women requires practical solutions that ensure equal access to education, employment, and public services. She described the E-Scooty Scheme as an investment in women’s independence, dignity, and future.

The scheme will distribute electric scooters through a transparent, merit-based process. Applicants will register online, and officials have pledged strict verification to ensure fair distribution among deserving candidates across Punjab.

Beyond improving mobility, the initiative supports Pakistan’s transition towards clean and affordable transport. Electric scooters eliminate fuel expenses, require lower maintenance, and produce zero tailpipe emissions, making them both economically and environmentally sustainable. At a time when Pakistan faces rising fuel prices and increasing urban air pollution, promoting electric mobility represents a

significant policy shift towards greener transportation.

The economic implications are equally important. According to the World Bank, increasing women’s participation in education and the workforce is essential for sustainable economic growth. Pakistan continues to have one of the region’s lower female labour force participation rates, with mobility constraints identified as a major obstacle. By reducing transport barriers, the E-Scooty Scheme has the potential to expand women’s access to employment, entrepreneurship, and vocational training while strengthening household incomes.

The initiative has received an encouraging response from students, professionals, and parents alike. Female students believe the scooters will improve punctuality, reduce travel expenses, and enable them to attend educational institutions more consistently. Working women expect greater flexibility and independence in managing professional responsibilities.

Parents have also welcomed the programme, citing enhanced safety and reliability compared to daily reliance on public transport. Many believe that easier mobility will encourage families to support girls’ higher education and professional careers.

Education experts argue that transportation remains a hidden cause of absenteeism and university dropouts among women. Reliable personal transport can improve attendance, academic performance, and retention while reducing the stress associated with daily commuting.

Social policy specialists describe the scheme as more than a transport project. Greater mobility enables women to access healthcare, training programmes, financial services, and business opportunities more efficiently. Increased mobility also encourages greater civic participation, contributing to a more inclusive and productive society.

Government officials have assured that the implementation process will be monitored closely to maintain transparency and accountability. If the

Continued on Page 7

Outgoing Ambassador of Azerbaijan pays farewell call on President

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: The outgoing Ambassador of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Mr Khazar Farhadov, paid a farewell call on President Asif Ali Zardari at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

The President commended his contribution to further strengthening the longstanding brotherly relations between Pakistan and Azerbaijan.

President Zardari mentioned that Pakistan deeply values Azerbaijan as a trusted brotherly country and strategic partner. He noted that bilateral ties, founded on mutual trust and steadfast support for each other's core interests, continue to grow stronger.

The President appreciated the outgoing Ambassador's role in the historic state visit of President Ilham Aliyev to Pakistan in July 2024, which marked a new chapter in bilateral relations.

President Zardari noted with satisfaction the enhanced trajectory of parliamentary, business, cultural and people-to-people exchanges between the two countries. He reiterated his deep commitment to translating the shared vision of the two countries' leadership into tangible outcomes in trade and investment,



connectivity, Information Technology, climate and tourism, as well as expanding defence and security cooperation.

President Zardari congratulated the outgoing Ambassador on the successful completion of his tenure in Islamabad and expressed his best

wishes for his future endeavours.

The outgoing Ambassador, who is headed to Malaysia, told the President that Pakistan had been his first ambassadorial posting and would always remain his "first love". "I will represent both Azerbaijan and Pakistan in Malaysia, Mr President," he



said. Mrs Tarana Farhadova was also

present during the meeting. She presented a pictorial book to Presi-

dent Asif Ali Zardari documenting their five-year stay in Pakistan.

Foreign Ministers of Algeria and Pakistan Discuss Promotion of Bilateral Relations

Spokesman Report

AMMAN: Algeria's Minister of State, Minister of Foreign Affairs, the National Community Abroad, and African Affairs, Mr. Ahmed Attaf, held a bilateral meeting with Pakistan's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Muhammad Ishaq Dar in Amman on 5 August 2026, on the sidelines of the ministerial meeting "In Support of Jerusalem and its Holy Sites."

The meeting took place during the two ministers' participation in the session of the Arab Ministerial Committee tasked with confronting illegal Israeli policies and measures in occupied Jerusalem, held in the Jordanian capital.

During the bilateral talks, the two ministers reviewed the state of Algerian-Pakistani relations and agreed to intensify efforts to strengthen cooperation across all areas by swiftly activating existing bilateral frameworks.

On regional and international matters, the two sides discussed issues



of common interest, particularly the Palestinian issue and the situation in

the Gaza Strip, as well as Pakistan's ongoing mediation efforts aimed at

de-escalating tensions in the Middle East.

D-8 Secretary-General Meets Daily Sabah Editor-in-Chief to Discuss Media Cooperation

Spokesman Report

ISTANBUL: The Secretary-General of the Developing-8 Organisation for Economic Cooperation (D-8) met with Mr. Ibrahim Zahid Altay, Editor-in-Chief of Daily Sabah and General Manager of Turkuvaz Publishing, at the Turkuvaz Media Center in Istanbul, according to a post shared on the Secretary-General's official social media account.

The meeting focused on joint initiatives to enhance international understanding and awareness of D-8's founding vision and the progressive evolution of practical cooperation within the framework. Both sides discussed the importance of coor-



minating strategic communications amid ongoing global uncertainty,

stressing the need for deeper engagement among media professionals and opinion-makers across D-8 member states through regular exchanges and increased interaction.

The two leaders also agreed that leveraging digital transformation and engaging and empowering D-8 youth should remain a special focus of future efforts.

The Secretary-General expressed appreciation for the warm hospitality extended during the visit and expressed hope for continued collaboration in amplifying the voice of D-8 and raising its international profile.

Further details on specific follow-up initiatives were not immediately available.

Meezan Bank Announces Financial Results for the Half Year Ended June 30, 2026

Commerce Desk

KARACHI: The Board of Directors of Meezan Bank, in their meeting approved the financial statements of the Bank for the half year ended June 30, 2026. The meeting was chaired by Mr. Riyadh S. A. A. Edrees – Chairman of the Board.

The Bank reported a Profit After Tax (PAT) of Rs 48.88 billion, achieving an annualised Return on Equity of 34.7%, reflecting its ongoing commitment to enhancing shareholder value. Concurrently, basic Earnings per Share were recorded at Rs 27.15 (H1 2025: Rs 25.72). The Board approved an interim cash dividend of 80% (Rs 8.00 per share) for the second quarter of 2026. The Bank continues to maintain a strong capital position, with a Capital Adequacy Ratio above 19%, well above the regulatory requirement. Additionally, Meezan Bank remains one of the most valuable Banks in Pakistan with market capitalization exceeding USD 3.3 billion.

Total assets remained broadly stable, with the Bank closing the first half year of 2026 at Rs 5.14 trillion, compared with Rs 4.81 trillion as at December 2025. The Bank continues to demonstrate strong asset quality, with a non-performing financing ratio of 1.83%, among the lowest in the banking sector. It also maintains a prudent level of provisioning against non-performing financings, reflected in a coverage ratio of 152%.

The first world championship for Akhal-Teke horses to be held in the Netherlands

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: From 4 to 6 September 2026, the Peelbergen Equestrian Centre in the Kingdom of the Netherlands will host the First World Championship for Akhal-Teke Horses—a landmark international event dedicated to one of the world's oldest and most treasured horse breed.

The Championship will bring together breeders, owners, equestrian experts, judges, and admirers of the Akhal-Teke horse from around the world, providing a unique platform for international cooperation and the promotion of this exceptional breed.

The Akhal-Teke horse, the national heritage and pride of Turkmen people, has for centuries symbolized beauty, elegance, endurance, intelligence, and loyalty. Thanks to the consistent efforts of Turkmenistan in preserving and promoting this ancient breed, the Akhal-Teke horse has gained worldwide recognition as one of the finest horse breeds in the world.

The inaugural World Championship represents an important milestone in the international promotion of the Akhal-Teke breed and reflects the growing global appreciation for its unique qualities and historical significance.

One of the highlights of the event will be performances by the renowned "Galkynys" National Equestrian Games Group and artists of the State Circus of Turkmenistan. A distinguished governmental and cultural delegation from Turkmenistan will travel to the Netherlands to participate in the extensive program of events.

COMSTECH Hosts Global South Innovation & Investment Summit to Boost Pakistan-China Tech Cooperation

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and China reaffirmed commitment to strengthening cooperation in innovation, science, technology and investment as OIC-COMSTECH hosted the Global South Innovation & Investment Summit 2026, jointly organized with Pathfinder CITADEL Pakistan and the Commercial Culture Association of China (CCAC).

The summit brought together a 13-member Chinese business delegation, government officials, diplomats, investors, CEOs, startup founders and researchers to promote technology commercialization and cross-border investment. Federal Minister

for Investment Kaiser Sheikh attended as chief guest, alongside COMSTECH Coordinator General Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary, Senior Advisor Dr. Shahid Mahmud, and CCAC representatives Li Ang and Wu Chenxi.

Prof. Choudhary said the Global South's two billion people hold vast scientific and entrepreneurial potential that must translate into innovation-driven growth, urging OIC states to become creators rather than consumers of technology. He highlighted COMSTECH's initiatives, including research fellowships, the AI Centre, and the COMS-

TECH-Huawei ICT Academy.

Minister Sheikh called for converting dialogue into practical outcomes — ideas into investment, partnerships into exports and jobs — emphasizing advanced manufacturing, AI, and university-industry collaboration as priorities for future Pakistan-China cooperation. He assured investors of transparent policies and institutional support.

CCAC's Li Ang praised Pakistan's innovation ecosystem and youth talent, reaffirming China's commitment to expanding cooperation in technology and industrial innovation. Dr. Shahid Mahmud stressed



building a sustainable innovation ecosystem linking researchers, entrepreneurs and policymakers across the Global South.

Discussions covered technology commercialization, startup financing, AI and clean technologies, with the summit creating opportunities for

business linkages between Pakistani and Chinese participants, marking a milestone in COMSTECH's science diplomacy efforts.

Bull & Bears
PSX 100-Share
Index Fluctuation

Pakistan: PSX 100-Share Index	
Current	Prev. Close
181,430.02	181,776.59
Day's High	Day's Low
181,647.27	180,620.08
Index Value	Change
24,623,189,830	−346.57
Percentage	Time
−0.19%	7 Aug, 2026 4:30 pm
Europe: FTSE 100 Index	
Index Value	Change
10,901.09	+33.20
Percentage	Time
+0.31%	7 Aug, 4:35 pm GMT +1
USA: Dow Jones Industrial Average	
Index Value	Change
53,982.97	+97.87
Percentage	Time
+0.18%	7 Aug, 1:41 pm GMT-4
Asia Pacific: Nikkei Stocks Average	
Index Value	Change
65,606.71	−76.55
Percentage	Time
−0.12%	7 Aug, 3:45 pm GMT+9
Open Market Forex Rates	

Karandaaz,
Kissan Gudam
Partner to Expand
Digital Financing
for Smallholder
Farmers



Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Karandaaz Pakistan has partnered with Kissan Gudam, a venture of the Hajisons Group, to modernise Pakistan's agricultural sector by improving smallholder farmers' access to digital financing, modern storage facilities and better market opportunities.

The initiative integrates climate-resilient hermetic storage, Electronic Warehouse Receipt (EWR)-based financing and digital trading to help farmers protect their harvests, reduce post-harvest losses and secure fair credit.

Using GrainPro's hermetic storage technology, the project will establish affordable, portable storage facilities closer to farming communities, preserving crop quality while lowering transportation costs.

Through a digital platform and warehouse-linked digital wallet, farmers will be able to use stored produce as collateral to obtain financing within minutes instead of weeks.

Karandaaz CEO Waqas ul Hasan said the partnership would strengthen agricultural infrastructure, improve market linkages and enable farmers to earn better returns while enhancing food security. Kissan Gudam CEO Farhan Tahir said the collaboration would promote financial inclusion, climate resilience and sustainable livelihoods.

The signing ceremony was attended by U. S. Embassy Economic Officer Tom A. Peter, who described the initiative as a strong example of U. S.-Pakistan collaboration in agriculture.

PTCL, PPAF provide safe drinking
water to 150,000 People in South
Punjab, Sindh

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Telecommunication Company Limited (PTCL), in collaboration with the Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF), has completed a major clean drinking water initiative, providing sustainable access to safe potable water to more than 150,000 people in the water-scarce regions of South Punjab and Sindh. Launched to mark Pakistan's 79th Independence Anniversary, the project aims to improve the lives of communities whose water sources were damaged or contaminated by the devastating floods of 2024.

The initiative introduced a range of climate-resilient water solutions, including Reverse Osmosis (RO) plants, rainwater harvesting systems, bio-sand filters, hand pumps and tube-wells, ensuring long-term access to clean drinking water in vulnerable communities. It builds on PTCL's earlier clean water project in Thar, which benefited over 15,000 people, and expands the company's outreach with more advanced and diversified



solutions.

PTCL Chief Executive Officer Nadeem Khan said access to clean drinking water is a fundamental human need and reaffirmed the company's commitment to improving lives and contributing to a stronger, more resilient Pakistan. PPAF CEO Nader Gul Barech said safe drinking water is essential for better health, livelihoods and community resilience, adding that partnerships such as this deliver sustainable, community-driven development.

The project forms part of PTCL's broader

'DilSe' sustainability platform, which promotes social impact through initiatives focused on digital inclusion, economic resilience and community development, while reinforcing the company's commitment to national progress beyond telecommunications.

Meeting

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State and Chairman Pakistan Virtual Assets Regulatory Authority, Bilal Bin Saqib in a meeting with Governor State Bank, Secretary Finance, Secretary Law and Justice, Chairman SECP , Chairman PDA and other Board members on Friday.



Photo: PID

Tobacco Growers Face
Exploitation as Marketing Season
Raises Concerns

Commerce Desk

NOWSHERA: Tobacco growers have raised serious concerns over the ongoing marketing season, alleging the Pakistan Tobacco Board (PTB) has failed to ensure purchases at the officially notified Weighted Average Price (WAP), forcing farmers to sell below approved rates despite heavy investment in cultivation.

Farmers urged PTB to enforce compliance among tobacco companies and, ahead of the next season, develop a transparent mechanism with district administrations to align cultivation with each company's approved quota and contracted area.

Growers also flagged the rising availability of imported and illegally traded cigarettes, saying this reduces demand for local tobacco and causes significant revenue losses to the FBR due to uncollected taxes.

Stakeholders called on the federal government, PTB, FBR and relevant authorities to enforce fair purchasing practices, curb illegal cigarette trade, and intro-



duce policies protecting growers' interests while safeguarding national revenue, warning that timely action is essential for the sector's sustainability.

MCB Bank Reports Resilient H1
2026 Performance, Declares 90%
Second Interim Dividend

Commerce

LAHORE: MCB Bank Limited announced its financial results for H1 2026, with the Board declaring a second interim cash dividend of Rs. 9.00 per share (90%), bringing the cumulative 2026 dividend to Rs. 18.00 per share (180%).

The Bank reported Profit Before Tax of Rs. 55.1 billion and Profit After Tax of Rs. 26.5 billion, with EPS of Rs. 22.34. Total income rose 6% year-on-



year to Rs. 93.9 billion, driven by higher net markup income

and a 21% increase in fee and commission income.

Total assets grew to Rs. 3.430 trillion, while deposits stood at Rs. 2.604 trillion with an improved current account mix of 55%. Asset quality remained satisfactory, with NPL infection at 6.26% and coverage at 93.13%. ROA and ROE stood at 1.59% and 21.49%, respectively.

MCB's credit ratings were reaffirmed at 'AAA/A1+' by PACRA, reflecting strong capital and liquidity positions.

SMAP, PM Youth
Programme and
NAV TTC Launch Free
Technical Training for
Salt Industry

Commerce Desk

KARACHI: The Salt Manufacturers Association of Pakistan (SMAP), in collaboration with the Prime Minister's Youth Programme (PMYP) and the National Vocational & Technical Training Commission (NAV TTC), has launched a three-month free technical training programme to develop skilled manpower for Pakistan's salt industry. Starting on August 24, the first batch will enroll 100 young men and women. The programme includes one month of classroom instruction followed by two months of on-the-job training in salt packaging, quality control, mining, export documen-



tation and value-added salt production. SMAP leaders said the initiative aims to address the industry's shortage of skilled workers, improve employability, promote value addition and strengthen Pakistan's salt exports by producing industry-ready professionals equipped with practical skills aligned with modern industry requirements.

SuperWize and ABHI
Partner to Bring
Sovereign AI to Pakistan's
Fintech Sector

Commerce Desk

LAHORE: SuperWize, Pakistan's sovereign AI company, and ABHI (Private) Limited, the country's leading embedded finance platform, announced a partnership under which ABHI will deploy SuperWize's sovereign AI models, hosted and processed entirely within Pakistan, ensuring compliance with local data protection regulations.

The companies will jointly implement AI across ABHI's operations, including customer support in English and Urdu, credit and risk workflows, and payroll and back-office automation.

ABHI serves thousands of companies and hundreds of thousands of employees nationwide through earned wage access, payroll, business financing and payment solutions.

SuperWize COO Muhammad Imran Sargaana said financial services are where sovereign AI matters most, offering ABHI frontier AI capability with full data sovereignty. ABHI Co-Founder and CEO Omair Ansari said the partnership would let the company embed AI across its operations while keeping customer data secure within Pakistan, calling it a natural step toward building the neobank of the future.

Unilever Pakistan
Hosts CCP Training to
Strengthen Competition
Law Compliance

Commerce Desk

KARACHI: Unilever Pakistan hosted the Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP) at its head office for a training session on competition law, reaffirming its commitment to ethical business practices, regulatory compliance and corporate integrity. The programme brought together CCP officials and Unilever employees to enhance understanding of competition law, fair markets and responsible business conduct.

Speaking at the event, Unilever Pakistan CEO Amir R. Paracha said continuous learning is vital to fostering

a culture of compliance and accountability. Company Secretary and General Counsel Aman Ghanchi emphasized that constructive engagement with regulators helps strengthen awareness and adherence to competition laws.

CCP Chairman Farid Ahmad Tarar said compliance begins with awareness and praised Unilever for investing in employee education to promote fair competition. CCP experts briefed participants on the Commission's mandate, deceptive marketing practices, mergers and acquisitions, abuse of dominant position, prohibited agreements and cartel-related issues.

Nation, Armed Forces Pay Tribute to Nishan-e-Haider Recipient Major Tufail Muhammad Shaheed on 68th Martyrdom Anniversary

Spokesman Report

RAWALPINDI: Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), HJ, Chief of the Army Staff & Chief of Defence Forces, Admiral Naveed Ashraf, NI, NI (M), T Bt, Chief of the Naval Staff, Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu, NI (M), HJ, Chief of the Air Staff and the Armed Forces of Pakistan solemnly commemorate the 68th martyrdom anniversary of Major Tufail Muhammad Shaheed, Nishan-e-Haider, paying

profound tribute to his extraordinary bravery, unwavering devotion to duty and supreme sacrifice in safeguarding the nation.

Major Tufail Muhammad Shaheed displayed extraordinary bravery and unwavering resolve as he led his troops in a daring assault against enemy forces. Despite being critically wounded, he fought on with indomitable courage and steadfast determination, ensuring the successful completion of his mission. His conspicuous gallantry and supreme



sacrifice earned him the Nishan-e-Haider, the nation's highest military honour and the ultimate symbol of valour.

On this solemn occasion, the people and Armed Forces of Pakistan pay glowing tribute to Major Tufail Muhammad Shaheed and to all martyrs who have laid down their lives in defence of the motherland. Their legacy of courage and patriotism continues to inspire generations and stands as a beacon for all defenders of the nation.



ISLAMABAD: Officials of the Pakistan Coating Association (PCA) pose for a group photo after signing a Strategic Marketing Alliance (MoU) with Indigo Creative Solutions to enhance branding, communication and digital marketing initiatives. Seen (L-R): Fiaz Haider, EC Member PCA; M. Ahmed, EC Member PCA; Salman Rafiq, Vice Chairman PCA; Iftikhar Bashir Ch, Chairman PCA; Amir Iqbal Sh, Convener Media Committee; and Col. Liaqat Ali Qamar, Secretary General PCA.

“Culture and Heritage of Pakistan Our Identity Our Pride” by Photojournalists Association

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: The 16th Annual Photo Exhibition of the Rawalpindi Islamabad Photo Journalists Association in collaboration with AL Sadat Group titled “Culture & National Heritage of Pakistan _ Our Identity, Our Pride” was held at Pakistan National Council of Arts.

The event was graced by Federal Minister for Culture & National Heritage Aurangzeb Khan Kachhi, Chairman Standing Committee on Defence Senator Talha Mahmood Chairman Sadat Group Syed Sadat Shah and Philippine Ambassador to Pakistan Dr. Emmanuel as chief guests and presided over by RIPJA President Sajjad Haider.

85 photojournalists from the twin cities displayed their artwork. Senior photojournalists and office bearers including Javed Nasir Chaudry Javed, Bashir Shad, Latif Adil, Ulfat shah, Mazhar Khan, Tanveer Shahzad, Afzal Chaudhry, Jahangir Chaudhry, Sohail Shahzad, Muhammad Asim, Zulfiqar Khan, Raja Mudassar and many others attended the event.

Aurangzeb Khan khichi said that Islamabad is home to over 10 officially recognized heritage sites that reflect



the rich history and cultural legacy of the region. The Ministry has launched restoration and conservation projects to protect these landmarks for future generations. “These heritage sites are not just monuments but a vital part of Pakistan’s identity and pride.

Senator Talha Mahmood described photojournalists as the “eyes of the nation,” commending their hard work and announcing that he would provide

necessary equipment for their media room. Syed Sadaqat Shah also appreciated the photographers for capturing powerful images and promoting Pakistani culture and announced an annual grant of Rs. 300k along with modern photography courses for RIPJA members.

The Exceptional and Exemplary pictures of Heritage sites including six protected by Ministry four under process and three pointed by Ripja including Ban

Faqiran Stupa 2nd-5th Century (C. E), Pharwala Fort 11th century, Mai Qamro mosque 150 year old, Rawal Fort 16th century, Shah Allah ditta caves 2400 years old, Tomb of Sultan Muqarab khan 18th century, Kuri Pavillion 18th century, British Period Memorial 20th century, Rehara Mosque 18th Century, Hindu temple Rawal dam 18th Century, Railway Bridge at Korang River constructed 1914 were displayed in this exhibition. The exhibition also showcased Pakistan’s living culture through powerful images capturing everyday life

Sajjad haider, in his inaugural speech, said that in the last 23 years his group has successfully organised many events and gifted laptops mobile phones camera bags cash prizes of about 10M and his association stands number one in country among all other journalist associations.

We are ready to join hands with Federal Minister to promote national heritage sites for citizens of pakistan and also foreign delegates he added.

At the conclusion, Al-Sadat Group and Talha Mahmood Foundation presented professional camera bags as gifts to all RIPJA members. Shields were also presented to distinguished guests by host of the event.

Mufti Taqi Usmani Welcomes Makkah Joint Defence Agreement



News Desk

KARACHI: Renowned religious scholar Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani has welcomed the joint defence agreement signed between Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Turkiye in Makkah Al-Mukarramah, describing it as a source of joy and satisfaction for the entire Muslim world.

In his statement, Mufti Taqi Usmani said the historic agreement between the three brotherly Islamic countries marks an important step forward in promoting mutual defence, cooperation and solidarity. He particularly noted it as a matter of great blessing that the agreement was concluded in the vicinity of the Kaaba in Makkah Al-Mukarramah.

Mufti Taqi Usmani congratulated the governments of Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Turkiye on this significant development, praying that Allah Almighty make the agreement a means of strengthening unity, mutual trust and collective security within the Muslim Ummah.

Sindh Leads Pakistan’s Climate Action Through Carbon Reforms, Mangrove Restoration



Abdul Ghafoor Sarohi

KARACHI: Sindh has emerged as Pakistan’s leading province in climate action by launching the country’s first government-led carbon credit project and strengthening environmental governance, Sindh Minister for Local Government, Housing and Town Planning Syed Nasir Hussain Shah said while addressing the 23rd Annual Environment Conference and Awards-2026.

Speaking at the conference organised by the National Forum for Environment & Health (NFEH), Shah said Sindh’s internationally recognised mangrove restoration programme in the Indus Delta has enabled Pakistan to generate foreign exchange through carbon credits. He announced that a Directorate of Carbon Credits has been established and 13 projects covering mangroves, riverine forests, agroforestry, biogas and landfill methane control are under implementation.

The minister said the Sindh Environmental Protection Act is being amended to align with international standards, while automated air quality monitoring stations, digital environmental monitoring and an online No Objection Certificate (NOC) system are enhancing transparency and accountability. He also highlighted urban forestry projects, the Jam Sakro Outfall Drain Project and energy-efficient building initiatives.

Shah announced the provincial government would contribute 10,000 saplings to NFEH’s monsoon plantation campaign in Karachi. Other speakers stressed improved urban governance, flood protection, water conservation, cleaner energy, climate-resilient infrastructure and stronger environmental safeguards. During the event, Shah presented Environment Excellence Awards-2026 to 68 organisations and recognition awards to 14 companies for their contributions to environmental sustainability.

Punjab Powers Women’s Mobility

Continued from Page 4

programme proves successful, it could be expanded to include larger numbers of beneficiaries, particularly teachers, healthcare workers, entrepreneurs, and women from remote and underserved communities.

The E-Scooty Scheme complements the Punjab Government’s wider development agenda focused on education, youth development, healthcare, and social welfare. Together, these initiatives seek to improve public services while creating greater opportunities for women to contribute to the province’s economic and social progress.

More than a transport initiative,

the CM Punjab E-Scooty Scheme represents a vision of inclusive development where mobility becomes a tool for empowerment. If implemented effectively, it can help thousands of women pursue education, enter the workforce, and participate more actively in society.

By combining women’s empowerment with environmentally responsible transport, the programme has the potential to become a landmark public policy initiative and a model for other provinces to follow. (The writer is a student of BS (Hons) Political Science,

The writer is student of Govt. Islamia Graduate College,for Women, Cooper Road, Lahore

Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Turkiye Sign Historic Makkah Joint Defence Agreement

Continued from Page 4

elevating a decades-old friendship into a formal defence partnership. Since then, Pakistan has deployed military personnel and aircraft to the Kingdom to support joint training exercises and bolster Saudi Arabia’s security requirements.

Pakistan’s defence relationship with Turkiye similarly has deep roots, with the two countries having exchanged warships, training aircraft, and technical expertise over the years.

Ankara and Islamabad have also expanded cooperation in defence manufacturing, an area experts believe could see further growth under the new trilateral framework.

A Formidable Trilateral Bloc Analysts note that the agreement brings together three states with distinct but complementary strategic assets: Saudi Arabia’s vast oil wealth and regional financial influence, Turkiye’s substantial conventional military capability as a NATO member, and

Pakistan’s nuclear deterrent and battle-tested armed forces. Taken together, the alliance forms what regional security researchers describe as a potentially formidable bloc capable of reshaping the balance of power across the Middle East and South Asia.

One Middle East security researcher, commenting on the pact, noted that it “creates significant opportunities to deepen its defence-industrial footprint through joint production, technology partnerships, procure-

ment and greater military interoperability” — suggesting the agreement’s implications may extend well beyond immediate deterrence into long-term industrial and economic cooperation among the three militaries.

Reactions and Broader Significance

The agreement has drawn swift reaction across the Muslim world. In Pakistan, prominent religious scholar Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani welcomed the pact, calling it a source of joy and

satisfaction for the wider Muslim Ummah and describing the choice of Makkah as the signing venue as particularly blessed. Political and diplomatic observers in Islamabad, Riyadh and Ankara have similarly framed the agreement as a milestone reflecting deepening Islamic solidarity at a moment of acute regional uncertainty.

For Pakistan, the agreement further cements its emerging role as a trusted security partner for Gulf states while reinforcing its

strategic relevance to Turkiye’s expanding regional ambitions. For Saudi Arabia, the pact offers a hedge against uncertainty over the reliability of its traditional Western security guarantees. For Turkiye, it strengthens Ankara’s position as a pivotal power bridging South Asia, the Gulf and the wider Islamic world.

As the dust settles on the signing ceremony, the coming months are likely to determine how quickly the agreement translates from a symbolic declaration

into concrete joint military structures, training programmes and defence-industrial partnerships — and whether it marks the beginning of a broader realignment of security arrangements across the Middle East and South Asia.

The writer is Founder President of Tourism Association of Pakistan and Convener FPCCI standing committee on Heritage & Hospitality. He can be reached at @naveedahmadkhan75

Meeting

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate, Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani in a meeting with Mr. Francis Woods, Global Program Director, Save The Children Australia, along with Mr. Arshad Malik, Regional Director and Mr. Khurram Gondal, Country Director Pakistan, at Parliament House, on Friday.



Photo: PID

Pakistan Reaffirms Commitment to Child Welfare, Climate Resilience and Youth Development

Kiran Asim

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gillani reaffirmed Parliament's commitment to promoting children's rights, quality education, healthcare, nutrition and child protection during a meeting with a delegation of Save the Children at Parliament House. Welcoming the organization's long-standing partnership with Pakistan since 1979, he appreciated its humanitarian and development initiatives benefiting children across the country.

The delegation briefed the Chairman on key programmes, including the USD 80 million Sindh School Meals Programme, implemented with the World Food Programme, which will improve nutrition and learning outcomes for over 200,000 children in nearly 1,300 schools. It also highlighted efforts to mobilize climate-resilient financing and collaboration with the World Mosquito Program to strengthen Pakistan's fight against dengue and other mosquito-borne diseases.

The delegation invited Gillani to a regional dialogue on child-responsive budgeting in Bangkok this November. The Chairman also emphasized preserving Pakistan's cultural heritage, particularly Multani Blue Pottery, while stressing that investing in education, skills and traditional crafts would enable the country's youth to drive national development. He reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to working with international partners for children's well-being and a more resilient future.

PM Shehbaz, high-level delegation perform Umrah; pray for country's progress

Spokesman Report

MAKKAH AL-MUKARRAMAH: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, along with his high-level delegation, performed Umrah here on Friday.

He was accompanied by his delegation including Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar; Chief of Army Staff and Chief of Defence Forces Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, federal ministers Khawaja Muhammad Asif and Attaullah Tarar, and Special Assistant to PM Tariq Fatemi.

The door of Khana Kaaba was opened specially for the prime minister and his delegation.

Following the completion of the Umrah rituals, the prime minister, field marshal, and other members of the Pakistani delegation offered special prayers for the progress and prosperity of the country, the safety and unity of the Muslim Ummah, and for regional and global peace.

The prime minister arrived in Jeddah on Thursday evening for a three-day visit to Saudi Arabia at the invitation of Saudi Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud.

Besides meeting with his Saudi counterpart, he will also pay a visit to the Roze-e-Rasool (PBUH) in Madinah.



BOI Minister Qaiser Sheikh Highlights Pakistan-China Cooperation at Global South Investment Summit

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for the Board of Investment Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh attended the Global South Innovation and Investment Summit 2026, hosted by OIC-COMSTTECH, as chief guest, alongside policymakers, diplomats, investors, and delegates including COMSTTECH's Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary and Chinese representatives Li Ang and Wu Chenxi.

Sheikh highlighted the potential of Pakistan-China economic cooperation, crediting China's growth to consistent policies, consensus-building and solution-focused business approaches. He urged Pakistan to leverage its youthful population through skills in technology and AI, and pursue value-added, export-led growth by learning from China, Vietnam, Bangladesh and India.

He outlined BOI's efforts to improve ease of doing business through regulatory reforms and one-window facilitation, stressed reducing Pakistan's trade imbalance with China through industrial development, and called for unlocking overseas Pakistanis' investment potential via policy consistency.

Sheikh emphasized public-private alignment, human development, and collective efforts to boost economic activity and youth employment, concluding with a call for stronger Global South cooperation.



France welcomes over 700 Pakistani students for higher education

ISLAMABAD: France ambassador to Pakistan Nicolas Galey on Friday said that Pakistan and France continue to strengthen academic ties as more than 700 Pakistani students head to France this year for higher education.

France welcomes over 700 Pakistani students for higher education

Speaking at a send-off event in Islamabad, French Ambassador highlighted the growth in educational exchange between the two nations. Four years ago, fewer than 200 Pakistani students were enrolled in French institutions. That number has grown to thousands, supported by joint efforts from Campus France, the French Embassy, and Pakistani universities.

France welcomes over 700 Pakistani students for higher education

Ambassador Nicolas said that many Pakistani scholars are participating in the European Union Erasmus Mundus program, with a majority choosing France as their primary destination.

France welcomes over 700 Pakistani students for higher education

He said among this year's cohort, 33 students earned merit scholarships funded by the French government or the European Union. Notably, half of these scholarship recipients are women, reflecting a shared focus on equal opportunity.

The ambassador further said, to assist departing students, Campus France provides support throughout the process, including program selection, visa applications, and pre-departure orientation.

PM Shehbaz, Saudi Crown Prince, Turkish President offer Friday prayers at Qasr Al-Safa



Spokesman Report

MAKKAH AL-MUKARRAMAH: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, on his official visit to Saudi Arabia, offered Friday prayers alongside Saudi Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan at Qasr Al-Safa.

Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Muhammad Ishaq Dar, Chief of Army Staff and Chief of Defence Forces Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, along with senior Saudi and Turkish officials, were also present on the occasion, a PM Office news release said.

Federal govt announces major reshuffle of senior officers

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: The federal government has transferred and posted several officers across key ministries and divisions. According to notifications issued by the Establishment Division, Muhammad Hassan Abdullah Malik, Deputy Secretary at the Prime Minister's Office (Public), has been transferred and directed to report to the Establishment Division.

Meanwhile, Muhammad Asif Rahim, BPS-19 of Pakistan Administrative Service (PAS) officer serving with the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government, has been transferred and appointed as Deputy Secretary in the Establishment Division.

Deputy Secretary Zafar Iqbal has been moved from the Council of Common Interests (CCI) Secretariat to the National Food Security Division.

The government has also made Deputy Secretary Samad Talib of the Economic Affairs Division as an OSD to enable him to pursue a two-year Master's degree programme in Japan on scholarship.

Separately, the services of Ashiq Hussain, a Grade-18 Commerce and Trade Group officer serving in the School Education Department, Sindh, have been repatriated to his parent department, the Ministry of Commerce in Islamabad.

In addition, Section Officer Syed Kumail Haider has been transferred from the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training to the National Food Security Division.

CM Maryam Nawaz welcomes Pakistan-Saudi Arabia-Türkiye defence pact

Bureau Report

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has warmly welcomed the defence agreement between Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Türkiye.

The chief minister described the trilateral defence pact as a defining moment in the history of the Muslim Ummah. She paid tribute to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Field Marshal Asim Munir for their efforts to promote unity among Muslim nations.

She said the holy land of Makkah had sent a clear message to the world that the Muslim world stands united, adding that the coming together of three major economic, military and political powers under the shadow of Makkah was a source of hope for the entire Ummah.

Maryam Nawaz said the joint defence agreement between Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Türkiye marked the beginning of a new chapter in the Islamic world. She said Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Field Marshal Asim Munir, together with the Saudi and Turkish leadership, had made the nation proud.

Khurram Schehzad says Pakistan moving towards sustainable, private sector-led growth

Commerce Desk

KARACHI: Adviser to the Finance Minister Khurram Schehzad said Pakistan has successfully transitioned from macroeconomic stabilization to sustainable, private sector-led growth, driven by structural reforms and improving investor confidence. Addressing the Future of Finance Summit 2026 in Karachi, he said GDP growth had recovered to 3.7 percent, agriculture grew by 2.89 percent, and large-scale manufacturing expanded by 6.1 percent during FY26. He highlighted fiscal improvements, noting the fiscal deficit remained below one percent of GDP, the debt-to-GDP ratio declined to 68 percent, the current account deficit narrowed sharply, and foreign exchange reserves exceeded US\$18 billion. He also cited the recent S&P Global Ratings upgrade and ongoing reforms in taxation, energy, privatization and state-owned enterprises. Schehzad said strong investor interest in FESCO's privatization and increased corporate activity reflected growing confidence in Pakistan's economy. He reaffirmed the government's commitment to reforms, investment promotion, exports and sustainable economic growth led by the private sector.

