



Daily The Spokesman

A Leading National Daily



فرمان رسول
نبی کریم صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم نے فرمایا جو شخص اللہ اور آخرت کے دن پر ایمان رکھتا ہو اسے اپنے مہمان کی عزت کرنا چاہیے اس کی خاطر دارکن ہنس ایک دن اور رات کی ہے مہمانی تین دن اور راتوں کی اس کے بعد جو ہو وہ مصروف ہے اور مہمان کے لیے جائز نہیں کہ وہ اپنے میزبان کے پاس اسے دن بھر چائے کرے۔
(بخاری: حدیث نمبر 6135)
Barkat Rice Mills (Pvt) Limited



Field Marshal Asim Munir, Iranian FM Araghchi Discuss Regional Situation

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi held a telephone conversation with Chief of Army Staff and Chief of Defence Forces Field Marshal Asim Munir during his visit to Beijing, according to Iranian media reports. The two officials discussed the latest regional developments as well as matters of mutual interest.



Pakistan Ready to Reopen Borders if Afghanistan Acts Against Militants

Pakistan said it's ready to reopen borders, restore transit trade, and use Afghanistan as a connectivity hub if Kabul takes verifiable action against anti-Pakistan militants. FO spokesperson Sajjad Haider Khan said cooperation on terrorism would end current restrictions, stressing Pakistan's policy favors a peaceful Afghanistan, internally stable and at peace with neighbors.

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Protest

LAHORE: Activists of Pakistan Markazi Muslim League (PMML) hold a protest against Houthis attacks on Saudi Arabia outside Lahore Press Club, in the Provincial Capital.



Photo: Online

Saudi-Houthi Clashes Escalate as Yemenis Flee by Boat Amid Widening Middle East War

Reuters

Saudi Arabia and Yemen's Houthis exchanged fresh strikes across their border on Thursday, with Yemenis fleeing by boat across the Red Sea as the expanding conflict threatens global oil supplies. Houthi television reported Saudi airstrikes in Hajjah province near

the Red Sea coast and around Taiz. Saudi civil defence confirmed a Yemeni resident was killed by debris from an intercepted drone in Taif — the first death Riyadh has announced since fighting escalated last week, following earlier reports of over 80 wounded.

In Djibouti, Wahida Omer, 50, described a harrowing boat

crossing after fleeing Houthi advances on her village of Dhubab, leaving her husband behind with no word on his fate. She recounted a frightening journey with passengers crying throughout. The International Organization for Migration says over 100,000 Yemenis have been displaced, mostly internally.

The Houthis, who seized Yemen's entire Red Sea coast in a rapid advance last week, claim Saudi forces have carried out hundreds of airstrikes, while firing missiles and drones back across the border. On Wednesday, the group said it downed a Saudi F-15 jet, releasing video of fighters at

the crash site holding wreckage bearing Saudi insignia.

Houthi leader Abdul Malik al-Houthi demanded Saudi Arabia end its "blockade and occupation" of Yemen and halt its aggression, speaking in a televised address flanked by slogans including "Death to America" and "Death to Israel."

NA Speaker Ayaz Sadiq receives Green Mace Award

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's Parliament has received the inaugural Green Mace Award during the main session of the 69th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference. National Assembly Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq received the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association's award in recognition of the Parliament's environmental protection measures.

The award recognised Pakistan's transition to a 100 per cent solar powered Parliament, paperless parliamentary proceedings and other eco-friendly initiatives, including rainwater harvesting at Parliament House.



Conference participants appreciated the use of electronic tablets to digitise National Assembly proceedings and described Pakistan's Green Parliament initiative as a model for other Commonwealth parliaments.

Speaking on the occasion, Speaker Ayaz Sadiq said the award was an honour and acknowledged Parliament's commitment to providing a clean and sustainable environment for future generations.

He said the Green Parliament journey was not undertaken to win an award but out of a sense of responsibility, adding that the recognition reaffirmed the need for further efforts towards environmental sustainability.

Naqvi says granting provincial status to Islamabad is need of the hour

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Federal minister Chaudhry Salik Hussain and Dr. Muhammad Amjad Syed on Federal Interior Minister Called on Mohsin Naqvi and held detailed discussion on the country's political situation, the creation of new provinces, and administrative reforms.

During the meeting, Mohsin Naqvi stated that more provinces are essential for national stability, development, and the resolution of public issues.

He said that the country's population has increased manifold, yet the administrative structure remains outdated.

Mohsin Naqvi said granting provincial status to the federal capital, Islamabad, was need of the hour. Ch Salik said that increasing the number of provinces will ensure equal attention and prompt administrative services for the public.

Dr Amjad said that the plan to grant provincial status to Islamabad is excellent idea and aligns with public needs. He said that provincial assembly will provide the citizens of Islamabad the opportunity to elect their own representatives.

SMS Charges Waived for Fuel Subsidy Scheme Registration on PM's Directives

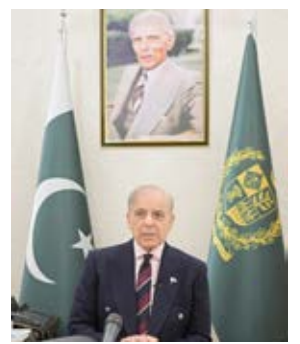
City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif has provided further facilitation for registration under the government's fuel subsidy scheme for low and middle-income segments.

On the PM's instructions, the SMS required for registration under the Petrol Subsidy Scheme has been made completely free of charge, according to the PM Office Media Wing.

Under the scheme, fuel subsidies are being provided to owners of motorcycles, rickshaws and vehicles up to 800cc. The relief is being extended across the country, including Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan.

Applicants can register by



sending an SMS to 9771 by typing REG, followed by a space, their CNIC number, vehicle number plate, first letter of the province where the vehicle is registered, and the vehicle's registration date. The registration SMS is now free.

Complete details of the scheme are available on the Urdu website www.pmfuel-relief.pk.

PM approves nationwide austerity drive amid surging global petroleum prices

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif approved a nationwide austerity and energy conservation campaign on Thursday, citing rising global petroleum prices amid Middle East tensions. Chairing a high-level review meeting, he said the government and elite should sacrifice first, noting a fuel subsidy of Rs100 per litre was already in place for motorcycles, rickshaws and vehicles up to 800cc.

Key measures approved include a 50 per cent cut in fuel allocations for government vehicles for three months (excluding ambulances, fire brigades and essential services), a five percent reduction in the non-ERE budget for FY2026-27, a complete ban on new government vehicle purchases, and a ban on durable goods procurement except IT equipment.

Government and overseas travel is suspended for three months, with unavoidable trips requiring economy class. Video conferencing will be maximized, official dinners banned except for foreign delegations, and the single-dish policy at weddings continued.

New business hours were also set: shops and malls close by 9 p.m., marriage halls by 10 p.m., and restaurants by 11 p.m., with hospitals, pharmacies, petrol stations, gyms and IT companies exempted.

A monitoring committee will track compliance across ministries and provinces, submitting weekly reports to the PM. The measures extend to SOEs, statutory bodies and regulatory authorities. Deputy PM Ishaq Dar and ministers Ahsan Khan Cheema, Ali Pervaiz Malik and Attaulah Tarar attended the meeting.

Senate Committee Raises Concern Over 58 Unimplemented Law Reform Recommendations

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Senate Standing Committee on Law and Justice, chaired by Senator Farooq H. Naek, reviewed the performance of the Law and Justice Commission of Pakistan. The Commission reported that of 143 approved law reform reports, only 46 recommendations were implemented, 33 partially implemented, and 58 remain unimplemented. Officials cited legislative changes affecting some recommendations, but the committee expressed concern over the persistent backlog.

Naek stressed the need for a follow-up mechanism and sought a detailed implementation report along with staffing details, also raising

concerns over delayed staff promotions. The committee discussed case management, fixing, and pendency, though the Commission clarified individual case fixing falls outside its mandate. The chairman emphasized effective case management as essential for timely justice.

E-filing reforms were reviewed, with the committee urging digital measures to benefit litigants and lawyers. The Access of Justice Development Fund was also discussed—growing from Rs. 1,421 million in 2005 to Rs. 4,057.14 million by June 30. The proposal for Women Facilitation Centers in district courts was considered, with further consultations planned with provinces and stakeholders.

Islamabad Police Arrest Imaan Mazari, Husband After SC Orders Their Release in Tweets Case

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad police re-arrested rights activist and lawyer Imaan Mazari and her husband Hadi Ali Chattha from Adiala Jail late Tuesday, hours after the Supreme Court ordered their release.

Earlier Thursday, a three-member bench headed by Justice Shahid Waheed accepted their petitions for suspension of sentence in

the controversial tweets case and granted bail against surety bonds of Rs200,000 pending the Islamabad High Court's final verdict.

Imaan and Hadi were sentenced in January 2026 to a combined 17 years by an Islamabad sessions court under PECA for social media posts the prosecution said amounted to an anti-state narrative.

During hearing, counsel Faisal Siddiqui

argued the IHC had failed to decide their suspension pleas within two weeks as directed by the SC on May 12, repeatedly adjourning the case. Justice Afghan remarked the IHC cites SC directives but does not act.

Late night, SSP Operations Qazi Ali Raza arrived at Adiala Jail with a contingent in ten vehicles and shifted the couple to Islamabad.

AJK Cabinet holds maiden meeting under PM Iftikhar Gillani

 **Bureau Report**

Muzaffarabad hosted the first meeting of the Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Iftikhar Gillani, with cabinet members, the Chief Secretary, and department secretaries in attendance. The PM described the cabinet as the top decision-making forum with direct impact on citizens, urging cooperation between the cabinet and bureaucracy for public welfare, and affirming that politicians best represent the people in a democracy.

He directed departments to align recruitment rules with the Third Party Recruitment Act, ensuring merit-based hiring, and called for a "Complaints Desk" in the PM's Office pending full activation of the complaint portal. He emphasized that better governance requires attitude change, not funding, and stressed alignment with the vision of Nawaz Sharif, PM Shabbaz Sharif,



and Maryam Nawaz. He instructed the district administration to promptly resolve public issues, including land disputes, ensuring no one's rights are violated and citizens feel secure.

The Education Schools Secretary briefed the cabinet on the Education Package 2026 and teacher recruitment policy; a committee was formed to review it. The Principal Secretary and Industries Secretary briefed members on the Asaan Karobar Act 2026.

Rathore Calls for Legislative Oversight of AJK Government's Reform Programme

 **Bureau Report**

MUZAFFARABAD: Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Azad Kashmir Central Secretary General and former prime minister Raja Faisal Mumtaz Rathore has welcomed the Azad Kashmir government's 100-day reform programme, but called for greater consultation with members of the Legislative Assembly to ensure meaningful results.

Rathore urged Prime Minister Syed Iftikhar Gilani to convene treasury and opposition members to seek their proposals and suggested forming an Assembly committee to transparently monitor implementation. He said healthcare, education, electricity and basic civic facilities in remote and suburban areas should receive particular attention to restore public confidence in democracy.

He said the PPP would act as a strong opposition, scrutinising government performance while avoiding confrontation or criticism for its own sake. The party, he added, would identify shortcomings and support corrective measures, while extending cooperation on democratic and public-oriented issues.

Rathore also reaffirmed the PPP's commitment to the identity of Jammu and Kashmir, the freedom cause and fundamental rights of its people.

Expressing sorrow over the Kappa Gali Bazaar fire in Leepa Valley, he urged the AJK government to compensate affected traders and announce a special rehabilitation package. He also appreciated the Pakistan Army for providing immediate financial assistance and essential supplies to the victims.



AJK Cabinet Reaffirms Confidence in PM Iftikhar Gillani

 **Bureau Report**

MUZAFFARABAD: The Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Cabinet, meeting with Prime Minister Iftikhar Gillani in the chair, has expressed full confidence in his leadership and congratulated him on assuming office.

The cabinet appreciated Gillani's vision for the development and prosperity of the state, describing it as aligned with the requirements of the 21st century. It also expressed appreciation for his commitment to using available resources to achieve these objectives.

Through a unanimous resolution, the cabinet lauded the Pakistan Army, police, law enforcement agencies and other government institutions for ensuring the peaceful conduct of the general elections. It also appreciated the Chief Election Commissioner, members and staff for conducting the polls effectively.

The cabinet welcomed the support expressed by Kashmiri people for PML-N leader Muhammad Nawaz Sharif and the formation of a PML-N government in AJK. It also appreciated the public welfare and development efforts of Prime Minister Muhammad Shabbaz Sharif and Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz.

The meeting expressed satisfaction over the Joint Mecca Defense Agreement, calling it important for Muslim-world unity and regional peace, while condemning the attempted drone attack near Mecca and expressing solidarity with Saudi Arabia.

The cabinet voiced concern over human rights violations in Indian-occupied Jammu and Kashmir and urged the international community, particularly the United Nations, to take effective action.

It resolved to accelerate development, improve governance, promote merit and transparency, complete projects on time and provide relief to the people.

Any Move to Alter AJK's Status Must Be Foiled: Sardar Attique



 **Abdul Majeed Tahir**

ISLAMABAD: Former Prime Minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir and President of the All Jammu & Kashmir Muslim Conference Sardar Attique Ahmed Khan has said any attempt to divide or alter the constitutional and political status of Azad Jammu and Kashmir must be resisted.

Addressing a meeting with a delegation of the Kashmir Justice Forum, he said the Kashmir dispute and territorial unity of the state had faced challenges from 1950 to the present, but political leadership in AJK had previously countered such threats through political wisdom and courage.

Sardar Attique said proposals to convert AJK into a province represented another challenge, adding that the Muslim Conference would make every effort to resist such moves. Recalling the era of former President General Pervez Musharraf, he said the introduction of the cross-Line of Control bus service and trade initiatives had been aimed at promoting people-to-people contact while maintaining the existing status of the state.

The meeting also discussed political unity, preservation of AJK's identity and continued efforts for the Kashmir cause.

Govt in panic, Islamabad turned into city of containers: Syed Ejaz Bukhari

 **Raza Naqvi**

ATTOK: PTI MPA from Attock, Syed Ejaz Hussain Bukhari, said the government has become panicked and turned Islamabad into a "city of containers," insisting barriers would not help it achieve its objectives since people had already made up their minds. Talking to media, he said the government had pushed people to extreme economic hardship, alleging PTI workers and leaders were being arrested from their homes despite no meetings, gatherings or processions having taken place to justify such action.

Bukhari accused rulers of spending billions from public funds on personal celebrations and continuing foreign visits while ordinary citizens face inflation, unemployment and economic distress, despite Pakistan's heavy debt burden. He said the solution lay not in further burdening the public but in strengthening the national economy.

He urged the government to create employment opportunities instead of blocking roads and businesses, support small traders and industrialists, cut unnecessary government expenditure, and simplify taxation. He said the government should prioritize resolving public problems over political confrontation, stressing that stability requires jobs, business opportunities and welfare-focused spending.

Red line

KARACHI: Activists of Pakistan Markazi Muslim League (PMML) hold a protest against Yemen's Houthis attacks on Saudi Arabia, in the Provincial Capital.



Photo: Online

IEEE Lahore Section Mini POCO and Funding Opportunities Workshop Held at UET Lahore

 **Tahir Amin Malik**

LAHORE: The IEEE Lahore Section Mini POCO and Funding Opportunities Workshop was held at the Vice Chancellor's Conference Room, University of Engineering and Technology (UET) Lahore, bringing together conference organizers, academics, researchers, technical leaders and IEEE volunteers to discuss conference management, funding opportunities, publication standards and best practices for organizing high-quality international conferences.

Prof. Dr. Shahzad Asif, Director, Al-Khawarizmi Institute of Computer Science (KICS), UET Lahore, delivered the welcome address and briefed participants on KICS and the objectives of the workshop. Dr. Yasir Saleem also welcomed the participants and highlighted the role of IEEE in creating academic, professional and collaborative opportunities for researchers, educators, professionals, students and volunteers.

The first technical session, "From Idea to Impact: IEEE Funding Opportunities & Proposal Strategies," was delivered by Prof. Dr. Muhammad Qasim Mehmood, Chair, IEEE APS/CAS/MTT/SSC Joint Chapter. He discussed various funding and support opportunities available through IEEE and emphasized the importance of developing clear, relevant and purposeful proposals. He highlighted relevance, clarity and passion as key elements for successful engagement with IEEE programmes and encouraged participants to



align proposed activities with the most appropriate IEEE societies and technical communities.

The session was followed by a 20-minute prayer break. The workshop resumed with Prof. Dr. Majid Hussain, Chair, Conference Committee, IEEE Lahore Section, who delivered a session on "Conference Roles, Responsibilities & IEEE Conference Timeline." He explained the responsibilities of key conference committees, the importance of clearly defined governance structures and the need for effective coordination throughout the conference lifecycle. He also discussed common mistakes, organizational risks and practical measures for improving conference planning and execution.

Kashif Bashir, Executive Chair of the 20th International Conference on Open Source Systems and Technologies (ICOSST 2026) and the 28th International Multi-Topic Conference (INMIC 2026), delivered a session on "IEEE Conference Management & Best Practices." He discussed IEEE conference application and approval procedures, funding pathways, major planning milestones and lessons

drawn from international and local IEEE conference initiatives, including IEEE GLOBECOM and ICOSST.

Dr. Ghulam Farooque, TPC Chair, 8th ICACS 2026, delivered a session on the formation and management of Technical Program Committees. He highlighted the importance of assigning clear responsibilities, developing an effective Call for Papers, promoting conferences through multiple channels, managing paper submissions and reviews through platforms such as EasyChair, and ensuring timely completion of technical program activities.

Shahid Zulfiqar, Publication Chair of the 20th ICOSST 2026, delivered a session on "Plagiarism, Paper Quality & Conference Publication Requirements." He introduced participants to the IEEE CrossCheck similarity-checking system and explained its role in maintaining academic integrity and publication quality. The session also covered publication committee responsibilities, similarity review procedures, documentation management and the systematic organization of conference publication records.

The program also featured



experience-sharing by senior academics and conference leaders, including Prof. Dr. Kaukab Jamal Zuberi, Prof. Dr. Atif Chatha and Prof. Dr. Atif Alvi, who highlighted practical measures for improving conference quality, governance and management. Prof. Dr. Shahzad Sarfraz, Director Campuses, FAST-NUCES, also shared the growth journey of ICIT, highlighting rising paper submissions, expanding international collaboration, institutional partnerships, industry engagement and future plans for stronger research and student development initiatives.

Two Memoranda of Understanding were signed during the workshop: one between IEEE Communications Society Lahore Chapter and the University of Lahore for an upcoming AI Summit, and another

between IEEE Lahore Section and FAST-NUCES Faisalabad Campus to strengthen collaboration for the ICIT conference, followed by the presentation of shields, certificates and souvenirs to speakers, organizers, distinguished guests and participants. Closing remarks were followed by lunch and networking.

The workshop provided a professional platform for knowledge exchange and strengthened participants' understanding of IEEE funding mechanisms, conference governance, technical program management, publication quality and organizational best practices. It also reinforced the role of IEEE conferences in promoting research, professional development, collaboration and technological innovation.



Islamabad
30° – 38° Clear

SERVICES	
Namaz Timings	
Fajr	4:28 am
Zohr	12:03 pm
Asr	4:27 pm
Maghrib	6:12 pm
Isha	7:36 pm

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Bomb Disposal	15
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Emergency Ambulance	1122 & 4451122
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MH	561116
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Sui Gas Complaint	119, 9272249
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Dr Tariq Fazal visits awareness booths for PM petroleum relief programme

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Dr Tariq Fazal Chaudhry on Thursday visited awareness booths established in Islamabad to facilitate citizens under the Prime Minister's Petroleum Relief Programme.

During his visit, the minister interacted with citizens and reviewed arrangements for providing information and guidance about the programme.

Citizens, particularly motorcycle users and owners of vehicles up to 800cc, were briefed on the procedure for availing petroleum relief under the programme.

Dr Tariq Fazal said Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's Petroleum Relief Programme had been launched to mitigate the impact of rising petroleum prices on the public.

He said the government was taking practical measures to ensure that the benefits of the relief programme reached eligible citizens effectively.

The minister said citizens were being provided direct guidance and information about the programme through the awareness booths.

Maryam Announces Cancer Hospitals in Every Division of Punjab

Asim Tanveer

MULTAN: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has announced that cancer treatment hospitals will be established in every division of Punjab and made functional within 12 months. Addressing the inaugural ceremony of the Multan Electrobuses Service, she highlighted various development and public welfare initiatives across the province.

The chief minister said 160 electric buses would soon operate in Multan, equipped with air-conditioning, free Wi-Fi, mobile charging facilities and CCTV monitoring. She announced that 1,100 additional electric buses were arriving, with services eventually extended to every district and tehsil. The provincial government aims to have 3,000 buses operational by year-end and ultimately reach 5,000.

Maryam Nawaz said the government had constructed, repaired or rehabilitated 50,000 roads and provided loans

to 200,000 people under the "Apni Chhat, Apna Ghar" programme. She said one million farmers had received Kisan Cards, while major allocations had been made for housing, sanitation, transport and hospitals.

She also highlighted healthcare initiatives, saying 100 million people had received free medical treatment during the previous year and medicines were being delivered to people's homes. She said a second PET scan machine had been installed in Multan and cancer treatment facilities were being expanded.

The chief minister announced that 100,000 electric bikes would be provided to students and said 300 Nawaz Sharif Schools of Eminence were being established across Punjab. She also said efforts to control smog had reduced air pollution.

Defending the use of an official aircraft, Maryam Nawaz said she had personally paid nearly Rs27.5 million for



a previous trip, including fuel, parking and other expenses. She maintained that

public funds were being used responsibly and said corruption was being

addressed through arrests of officials accused of taking bribes.

Elevated security

ISLAMABAD: Trailer carrying shipping container parked on Srinagar Highway, in the Federal Capital as authorities' elevated security and placed the Red Zone on high alert with shipping containers ahead of multiple opposition protests scheduled through last ten days of September 2026.



Photo: Online

Zaireen Khidmat Committee Satisfied with Development Work at Roza-e-Masooma-e-Sindh

News Desk

KARACHI: The Zaireen Khidmat Committee Sindh expressed satisfaction over ongoing construction and development work at Roza-e-Masooma-e-Sindh, Bibi Khadija Maham (SA), at Agham Kot, District Badin, during its online meeting on Thursday.

The Committee appreciated senior officials of Sindh Auqaf Department and urged completion of the project within stipulated timeframe strictly as per approved design and layout, without compromise on quality or facilities for Zaireen.

It noted the Auqaf-administered area spreads over 73.5 acres, encompassing the shrines of Bibi Khadija Maham (SA) and Makhdoom Ismail Soomro, who devoted his life to serving her grave, locally known as "Madina Wali Bibi."

The department took over administration in 2021 to provide improved facilities to Zaireen. The Committee also offered special prayers for speedy recovery of scholar Zawwar Abdul Sattar Dars, hospitalized for heart ailment, acknowledging



his role in highlighting the shrine's historical and religious significance.

NAB KP Holds Briefing on Legal Framework for State Land Leasing

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa organized a briefing session on state land leasing's legal and administrative framework, attended virtually by NAB Chairman Lt. Gen. (R) Nazir Ahmed and in-person by Chief Secretary KP Shahab Ali Shah and other senior officials. DG NAB KP Naveed Haider Zahid highlighted NAB's Land Directorate, established in 2025, which recovered 2.98 million acres worth Rs5.976 trillion nationwide in 2025, and noted KP-specific gaps addressed through the new State Land Management System database.



Ahmed Ali Zafar presented on KP's legal framework for land revenue matters, while DG Operations Amjad

Majeed Aulakh shared findings on land leasing issues and improvement recommendations. Prosecutor General

Syed Ihtesham Qadir Shah discussed superior court judgments on revenue authorities' responsibilities, emphasizing state land as public trust.

Chief Secretary Shah praised the initiative's potential to inform legislation. Chairman NAB expressed satisfaction over NAB-KP collaboration, stressing lawful governance, corrective measures over past shortcomings, and development of a roadmap to implement recommendations. The session concluded with agreement that anti-corruption efforts and good governance are complementary, with continued NAB-provincial collaboration seen as key to unlocking state land resources for public benefit.

UN Nomination of Maryam Nawaz for Award an Honour for 140 Million Punjabis: Azma Bokhari

Bureau Report



LAHORE: Punjab Minister for Information and Culture Azma Bokhari has said that the "Apni Chhat Apna Ghar" project is among the five major projects in the world and is the largest project in Pakistan. The "Apni Chhat Apna Ghar" project has been developed by the Punjab government through its own resources.

She said that in the history of Pakistan, no other government had ever received an award of such magnitude as the one being awarded to Maryam Nawaz. Under the "Apni Chhat Apna Ghar" project, 202,913 houses have been built, while 118,088 houses have been completed. Another 53,233 houses are under construction.

Azma Bokhari said that providing deserving and homeless people with their own homes was Maryam Nawaz's dream. Alhamdulillah, in just two years, Maryam Nawaz has succeeded in providing homes to more than 200,000 people. Maryam Nawaz has set a target of providing "Apni Chhat" to 500,000 people within five years.

14-Year-Old Asad Atif Wins U-14 National Padel Championship Title

News Desk

Karachi's Asad Atif has won the U-14 National Padel Championship at just 14, marking a major milestone in his sporting career. Having shown talent from a young age, he has excelled in junior competitions while also competing against senior players in the Men's category, showcasing strong ability and competitive spirit.

His recent achievements include being named MVP at a Cadet Padel



Event in Qatar and reaching the runner-up final in the Men's category at Lahore Padel Inn. Sports circles note that his participation across both junior and senior levels is giving him valuable exposure ahead of future major tournaments, reflecting the rise of promising young talent in Pakistan's growing padel scene.

Asad remains committed to improving through hard work and discipline, aiming to represent Pakistan internationally. He and his family expressed gratitude to supporters, including Mr. Abbas, Anwar and Muhammad Ahmed, for their encouragement. The title marks the start of a promising new chapter in his career.

Painting Hope, One Parw at a Time: Lahore Comes Together for Voiceless

City Desk

LAHORE: Aagosh e Bezubaan (Lap of Voiceless) hosted a heart-felt "Sip & Paint" fundraising event in DHA, Lahore, bringing together art, compassion and community in support of innocent animals.

More than an art gathering, the evening raised funds for the shelter's ongoing welfare work to provide food, medical care, shelter and support to abandoned and injured animals. At the heart of the mission is Ms. Hina Waseem, CEO & Founder, who runs the shelter through her own personal funds, dedicating her time and resources to protecting voiceless lives.

The event was made possible by Ms. Sana Nadeem, Event Media Coordinator, who devoted her evenings alongside Ms. Waseem to make it purposeful.

Welcoming families, animal lovers and art enthusiasts, participants shared laughter and creativity with a common purpose. Every brushstroke became a gesture of kindness.

Aagosh e Bezubaan thanked all attendees, noting that even a small act can mean everything for a voiceless life.

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Digital Governance as Diplomacy: What the Somalia-Pakistan Partnership Gets Right

The conclusion of Somalia's ten-day peer learning mission to Pakistan, capped by a technical cooperation roundtable chaired by Senate Chairman Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani, deserves attention beyond the diplomatic courtesies typically extended to visiting delegations. This was not a ceremonial exchange but a substantive engagement — one that offers a useful model for how developing nations can share hard-won institutional knowledge without the paternalism that often accompanies such partnerships.

What distinguishes this initiative is its framing as, in the words of NIRA Director General Abdiwali Ali Abdulle, “a partnership among equals.” Pakistan brought genuine expertise to the table: NADRA's identity infrastructure, BISP's social registry and payment systems, Raast's instant payment architecture, and the Federal Board of Revenue's approach to linking identity with taxation. Yet the exchange was not one-directional. Somalia's experience with mobile money and rapid digital adoption offers Pakistan its own lessons, a reminder that technological leapfrogging can flow in unexpected directions.

This matters because digital identity systems, done poorly, can just as easily entrench exclusion as solve it. The mission's attention to reaching women, displaced populations and marginalized communities — evidenced by the session with civil society organizations — signals an awareness that functional identity systems are not merely technical exercises in databases and numbers. As Counsellor Jama Hassan aptly noted, functional identity is not synonymous with having a number or a database entry. Pakistan's own experience, including UNDP's work with NADRA that helped over a million women secure identity documents, illustrates both the promise and the difficulty of building inclusive systems.

Chairman Gilani's remarks linking digital governance to parliamentary oversight are also worth underscoring. Too often, digital transformation initiatives are treated purely as executive or technocratic projects, disconnected from legislative accountability. His invocation of the Senate's own move toward a paperless e-Parliament suggests an understanding that digital governance must be inclusive, secure and rights-based — principles that require legislative buy-in, not just executive fiat.

The validated Partnership Action Matrix, spanning legal identity, digital public infrastructure and financial inclusion, gives this collaboration a concrete roadmap rather than vague goodwill. Whether this translates into durable outcomes will depend on sustained institutional follow-through on both sides, not just the momentum of a single roundtable.

Still, this mission offers a template worth replicating: South-South cooperation grounded in mutual respect, technical specificity, and an explicit commitment to inclusion. In a region where digital transformation often outpaces safeguards, that combination is not a small achievement.

US Congress Impeaches Hegseth over Illegal War with Iran

The effort to impeach Secretary of Defense Peter Brian Hegseth places a fundamental question before the United States Congress: will constitutional limits govern the executive's use of military force, or will presidential command become its own justification for war? Whether this effort succeeds or fails, its significance extends beyond one official's future. It demands accountability for initiating and continuing hostilities against Iran and challenges the displacement of congressional authority by executive decisions carrying profound human, military, and economic consequences.

Representative Thomas Massie's September 15 impeachment initiative presents a specific charge against Hegseth: that he knowingly implemented unlawful orders to wage war. The accusation concerns both the decision to introduce American forces into hostilities on February 28, 2026, and their continued employment afterward. Its central contention is that the administration acted without congressional authorization or an independent constitutional basis for immediate defensive action. This is the foundation of the impeachment effort, and it deserves to be stated fully and directly.

The resolution identifies three circumstances that were absent when Hegseth directed American forces into hostilities against Iran: Congress had not declared war against the Islamic Republic of Iran,

congress had not enacted any specific statutory authorization for introducing United States armed forces into hostilities against Iran and no national emergency had been created by an Iranian attack upon the United States, its territories or possessions, or its armed forces.

These points form the factual basis of the allegation that the operation did not satisfy the circumstances identified in Section 2(c) of the War Powers Resolution. The charge goes further. It states that no imminent attack upon the United States, its territories, possessions, or armed forces existed.

In support, it invokes the March 17 resignation letter of Joe Kent, then director of the National Counterterrorism Center: “I cannot in good conscience support the ongoing war in Iran. Iran posed no imminent threat to our nation.” Massie's case therefore challenges both the absence of congressional authorization and the claim that immediate defensive necessity supplied an alternative basis for commencing hostilities.

From those premises, the resolution draws an unequivocal legal conclusion: the introduction of American forces was unlawful from its inception, and subsequent military actions continued that unlawful undertaking.

It alleges that Hegseth neverthe-

less knowingly employed the powers, personnel, weapons, and resources of the Department of Defense to execute the order. The accusation is therefore one of personal responsibility in implementing allegedly unlawful military action. It does not treat his subordinate position within the administration as sufficient to discharge his obligations.

Two forms of alleged abuse follow. First, Hegseth executed an unlawful order to commence hostilities despite the absence of the specified authorization or emergency. Second, he continued employing departmental personnel and resources after that initiation, without any subsequent declaration of war or specific statutory authorization.

The resolution characterizes this conduct as substituting unlawful executive action for Congress's constitutional and statutory judgment. It seeks impeachment, Senate trial, removal, and disqualification from federal office on the grounds that his conduct was incompatible with his duties and the rule of law.

The charges against Hegseth are clear and understandable. The absence of an existential threat to the United States from Iran has been discussed repeatedly in my own articles and by journalists, analysts, Democrats, and other public representatives. Iran's strategic calcu-

lations did not suggest a willingness to invite overwhelming destruction by launching an attack on American soil. The justification for initiating this war therefore demands the closest scrutiny.

The narrative recalls the manufactured justifications advanced for earlier interventions in Iraq, Libya, Syria, and Afghanistan. In Iran's case, the grounds offered for war appear especially flimsy. Repetition does not make an allegation convincing, and the assertion of danger cannot substitute for a credible explanation of why war was necessary.

Hegseth is not the final decision-making authority. He acts under the direction and command of President Trump, the commander in chief. The accusations against the secretary therefore also raise questions about the president who authorized the policy. This effort may be a preview of a larger confrontation. If it succeeds, the president's own vulnerability will become more apparent.

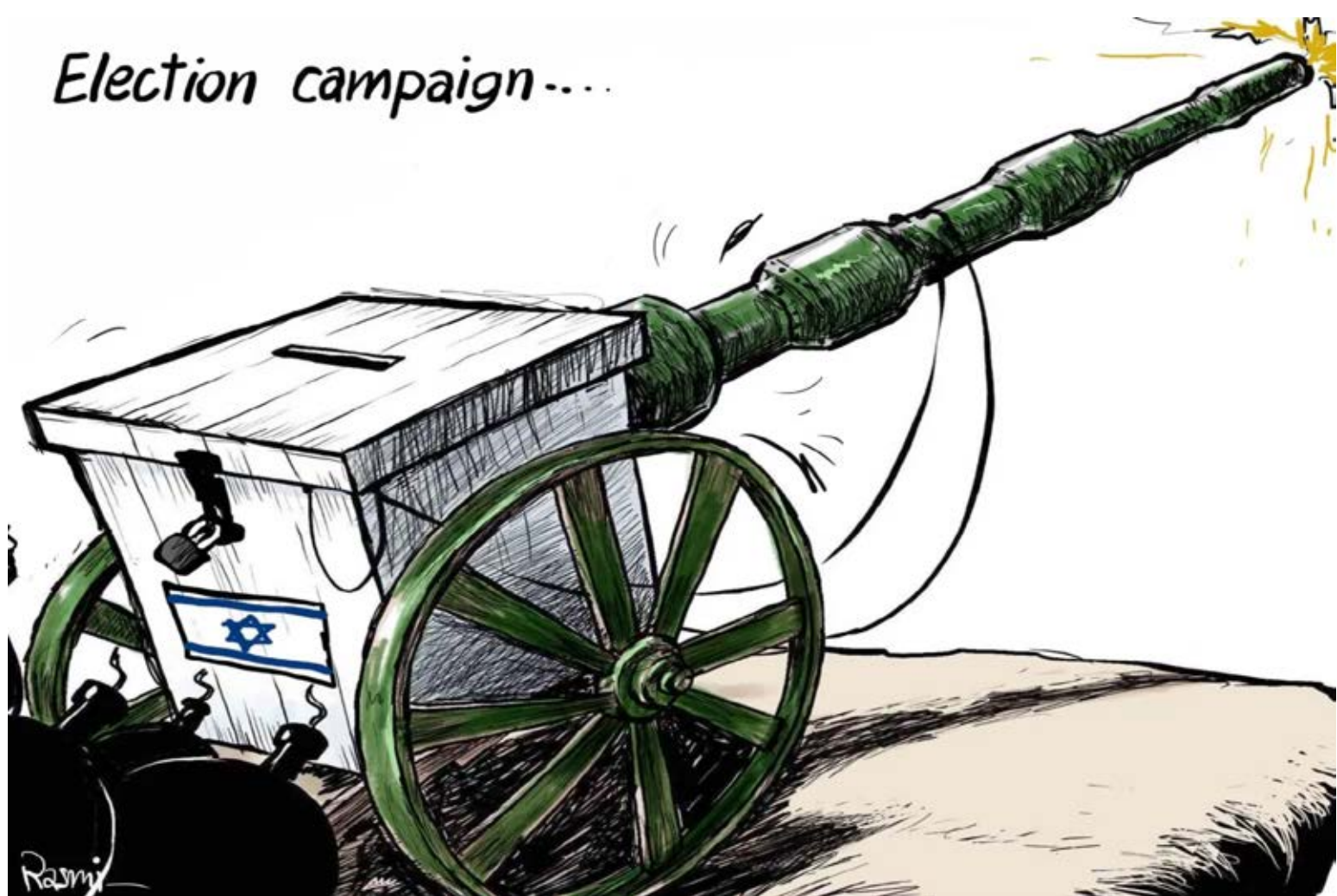
The war has also been brutal in its language. Hegseth's derogatory remarks about Iran and its leadership fall below the dignity expected of his office. Similar language from the president compounds that failure. The United States has long associated its standing with human rights, civility, and respect for human dignity and honor. Those ideals are undermined when its leaders speak contemptuously of another country and its people.

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Analysis



Qamar Bashir



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

Beyond the Declaration: Xi Jinping's Vision for BRICS and the Global South

At the 2026 BRICS Summit, Chinese President Xi Jinping delivered a timely and consequential message. Amid geopolitical rivalry, economic fragmentation, technological competition and persistent development disparities, he presented BRICS not as a challenger to the existing order, but as a force for stability, inclusiveness and shared prosperity.

Xi's central proposition was that BRICS should become an “active, stabilising and positive force in international affairs.” More significantly, he observed that “the Global South, with its collective rise, has become a key driver of world multipolarity” and urged BRICS members to “seize the historical initiative, rally the Global South, and advance the well-being of all humanity.” These remarks encapsulated the strategic essence of his address: BRICS should serve as a platform for cooperation, development and reform rather than geopolitical confrontation.

This emphasis is especially significant because, as BRICS expands in membership and influence, some Western observers increasingly portray it as an anti-Western coalition. Xi sought to dispel that perception by championing multilateralism, inclusiveness and shared development over bloc politics. The bloc's strength lies not in opposing any country or alliance but in amplifying the collective voice of the Global South.

The growing appeal of BRICS reflects a recognition that post-Second World War governance structures no longer adequately represent contemporary realities. Developing nations seek greater representation and fair-

ness, not disruption. Xi's call for a more inclusive international order directly addresses this imbalance.

Among China's five proposals, placing open-source and inclusive artificial intelligence cooperation first was especially significant. By prioritising AI, China signalled that developing countries must become active participants, not passive consumers, in the next technological revolution.

Xi's proposal for an open-source AI community reflects the belief that technological advancement should not remain concentrated in a handful of countries or corporations. If access to AI remains restricted, the digital divide may widen further. Broader participation, by contrast, could transform AI into a powerful instrument of inclusive development. Nations shaping AI today will inevitably influence the economic and social architecture of tomorrow.

The challenge, however, lies in implementation. BRICS members differ significantly in technological capabilities, regulatory frameworks and digital infrastructure. Xi's proposals offer a practical roadmap through training programmes, technology exchanges, joint research initiatives, digital-skills development and engineer cultivation. Open-source platforms can help emerging technological ecosystems benefit from innovations developed elsewhere, while dialogue on AI governance can promote regulatory convergence without imposing uniformity.

The guiding principle is complementarity. Each member contributes its comparative strengths while benefiting from collective expertise, thereby strengthening innovation, resilience and trust.

Xi's initiatives also suggest that BRICS is entering a new phase. Historically, the bloc functioned primarily as a forum for political consultation and economic dialogue. The emphasis on artificial intelligence, digital industries, smart manufacturing, investment facilitation and talent development points towards deeper economic and technological integration.

This evolution reflects the realities of an era in which growth is increasingly driven by innovation, digital connectivity and resilient supply chains. If implemented effectively, these initiatives could strengthen intra-BRICS cooperation and demonstrate that the bloc can move from declarations to delivery.

Yet a gap remains between Xi's strategic vision and the summit's final communiqué. While the New Delhi Declaration reflected broad consensus, it gave less prominence to themes central to Xi's address, including open-source AI cooperation, technological inclusivity, global governance reform and transforming the rise of the Global South into greater institutional influence. The declaration reflected diplomatic compromise; Xi's speech offered a more ambitious roadmap.

Xi also underscored a broader historical shift: the rise of the Global South. Developing countries account for an increasing share of global growth, trade and innovation, yet remain underrepresented in major international institutions. To translate economic weight into political influence, cohesion will be essential.

Individually, even large developing states face limitations in advancing reform. Collectively, however, BRICS possesses considerable demographic, economic and diplomatic leverage. Coordinated positions on trade, finance, technological governance and United Nations reform can help make international institutions more reflective of contemporary

Continued on Page 7

Analysis



S. M. Hali

Nation backs armed forces to surmount internal, external challenges

The world is passing through an unusually difficult phase marked by geopolitical tensions, economic pressures and evolving security challenges. The Middle East remains volatile, while Pakistan continues to confront terrorism and internal security threats. In such circumstances, the responsibilities of Pakistan's armed forces inevitably extend beyond conventional border defence to the wider regional security environment.

The Makkah Agreement for Joint Defence between Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Türkiye is an important development in this changing landscape. Its Strategic Political and Defence Committee held its first meeting in Istanbul on August 31, bringing together the foreign and defence ministers and senior military leadership of the three countries. The participants reaffirmed their commitment to regional peace, de-escalation, collective defence and stronger institutional cooperation.

The recent diplomatic and military engagements of Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir also acquire significance in this broader context. His visit to Tehran on August 24, amid the US-Iran conflict, was described by Pakistan's Foreign Office as part of Pakistan's diplomatic efforts to promote de-escalation, break the military stalemate and explore a negotiated settlement.

These developments demonstrate that Pakistan's security environment can no longer be viewed exclusively through the lens of its territorial borders. Relations with Saudi Arabia, Türkiye, Iran and other regional and inter-

national partners have acquired greater strategic importance. Military preparedness and diplomacy must therefore operate alongside each other.

This brings us to an important question: when the challenges confronting our armed forces are increasing, what are the responsibilities of the nation?

The answer lies not in political affiliation but in a wider sense of national responsibility. Political disagreement is an essential part of democracy. Questioning a government, criticising policies and protesting against inflation or economic hardship are legitimate democratic activities. But rights are accompanied by responsibilities.

Pakistan is confronting interconnected challenges involving terrorism, economic pressures, political tensions and regional instability. At a time when our security personnel continue to sacrifice their lives in the fight against terrorism, society must ensure that legitimate political disagreement does not turn into unnecessary confrontation or instability.

This does not mean that people should ignore their economic difficulties. Rising petroleum prices, inflation, unemployment, electricity costs, taxation and inadequate public services are genuine concerns. The government has a responsibility to listen to these grievances and provide relief wherever possible. Political parties have an equally legitimate role in highlighting public concerns and questioning government policies.

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Analysis



Sardar Abdul Khaliq Wasi

Rana Tanveer Hussain praises Malaysia as a model of economic success at National Day event

Naveed Ahmad Khan

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Food Security, Rana Tanveer Hussain, extended heartfelt congratulations to the people and government of Malaysia on the occasion of their National Day, as he graced the celebrations as chief guest at a prestigious ceremony held at the Islamabad Serena Hotel. The event, organized by the Malaysian High Commission in Pakistan, marked the 69th National Day of Malaysia and was celebrated with great fervour, enthusiasm, and cultural warmth, reflecting the depth of friendship shared between the two nations.

The evening brought together a distinguished gathering that included Qaiser Ahmed Shaikh, Federal Minister for Board of Investment; H. E. Atadjan Movlamov, Dean of the Diplomatic Corps and Ambassador of Turkmenistan to Pakistan; along with numerous other diplomats, senior government officials, members of the media, and representatives of the Malaysian community residing in Pakistan. The diverse assembly underscored the significance of the occasion and the broad-based interest in celebrating the enduring bilateral relationship between Islamabad and Kuala Lumpur.

In his address to the gathering, Federal Minister Rana Tanveer Hussain lauded Malaysia's remarkable progress and development over the decades, describing

the country as a model of economic success and regional cooperation. He noted that Malaysia's journey of growth, marked by industrial diversification, technological advancement, and social development, offers valuable lessons for developing nations striving to achieve sustainable prosperity. The Minister reaffirmed Pakistan's unwavering commitment to further strengthening its already robust relationship with Malaysia, with particular emphasis on deepening cooperation in trade, food security, and broader economic collaboration. He expressed optimism that the two countries would continue to explore new avenues of partnership that could benefit both nations and their peoples in the years ahead.

Earlier in the proceedings, Dato' Mohammad Azhar Mazlan, High Commissioner of Malaysia to Pakistan, along with his spouse, warmly welcomed the guests as they arrived at the venue, setting a gracious and hospitable tone for the evening's festivities. The High Commissioner's reception reflected the traditional warmth for which Malaysian hospitality is known, and it helped create an atmosphere of camaraderie among the attendees from the outset.

Addressing the gathering, High Commissioner Dato Azhar bin Mazlan expressed his profound gratitude to the Government of Pakistan for its warm hospitality and for the honour extended to the Malaysian nation through



the presence of such distinguished guests at the celebration. He took the opportunity to highlight the deep-rooted, fraternal bonds that have long connected Malaysia and Pakistan, describing them as relationships founded on shared values, mutual respect, and a common vision for regional peace and prosperity. The High Commissioner remarked that the

friendship between the two countries has historically transcended mere diplomatic formality, extending into genuine people-to-people connections nurtured over decades of cooperation across political, economic, and cultural spheres.

The formal proceedings of the event commenced with the playing of the national anthems



of both Malaysia and Pakistan, a solemn and symbolic gesture that set the tone for the evening and reminded attendees of the sovereignty and shared aspirations of the two nations. This was followed by a ceremonial cake-cutting to mark the joyous occasion, during which the Chief Guest, the High Commissioner, and other notable dignitaries jointly participated in cutting the celebratory cake. The gesture served as a poignant symbol of the enduring friendship and continuously growing bilateral ties between Malaysia and Pakistan, capturing in a single moment the spirit of unity and goodwill that defined the entire

event. Following the ceremonial segment, the celebration transitioned into a vibrant showcase of Malaysian heritage, featuring a traditional cultural performance that captivated the audience with its colour, rhythm, and artistic expression. The performance offered guests a glimpse into Malaysia's rich cultural tapestry, further strengthening the sense of connection between the two peoples. The evening concluded with a sumptuous dinner featuring an array of authentic Malaysian cuisine, allowing guests to savour the distinctive flavours and culinary traditions of the nation while

enjoying an evening of fellowship and celebration.

Throughout the event, the atmosphere remained one of warmth, mutual respect, and genuine celebration, with attendees expressing appreciation for the opportunity to partake in Malaysia's National Day festivities on Pakistani soil. The presence of senior government officials, diplomats from various countries, and members of the Malaysian community together highlighted the multifaceted nature of the Malaysia-Pakistan relationship, one that spans diplomatic, economic, and cultural dimensions.

The celebration ultimately served as a meaningful reaffirmation of the strong diplomatic and people-to-people ties that continue to flourish between Malaysia and Pakistan. As both nations look toward the future, events such as this stand as reminders of the shared history and collaborative spirit that have long characterized their partnership, and as a foundation upon which further cooperation in trade, investment, food security, and cultural exchange can be built in the years to come.

Photos by Imtiaz Ahmad Fazi



Hamdard Foundation Holds Naunehal Seerat Conference in Karachi

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Hamdard Foundation Pakistan organised a Naunehal Seerat Conference at Bait-ul-Hikmah Auditorium, Madinat-ul-Hikmah, presided over by HFP President Sadia Rashid. The event featured Hamd, Na'at, a Milad gathering and a Bismillah ceremony.

Chief guest Professor Dr Shaista Tabassum, former Acting Vice Chancellor of Karachi University, said studying the Prophet's (PBUH) Seerat is essential for character building, urging attendees to apply its teachings of truthfulness, honesty, justice and love for humanity in daily life rather than blindly following tradition. She also stressed careful word choice in religious speeches and Na'at, praised the children's speeches and teachers' efforts, and paid tribute to Shaheed Hakim Mohammed Said's educational legacy.



Student speakers from Hamdard Public School, New Standard Public School, The Oasis Public School and Azimi Public Higher Secondary School highlighted the Proph-

et's (PBUH) mercy, patience and forgiveness, urging others to follow his example and cultivate compassion.

Students from various Hamdard schools performed

Hamd and Na'at during the Milad gathering. Hamdard CEO Fatema Munir Ahmed, Hamdard University Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr Imran Amin, teachers and parents



attended. The conference concluded with a Bismillah

ceremony for students Naimal Imdad and Syeda Ayesha

Naqvi, led by Qari Hamid Mahmood Al-Hussaini.

Pakistan Sets Digital Standard for Legislation with PDLP Endorsement

City Desdk

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Law and Justice has endorsed the Pakistan Digital Legislation Profile (PDLP), developed by the Pakistan Digital Authority (PDA), establishing a national digital standard for legislation. PDLP adapts the international Akoma Ntoso standard to Pakistan's legal system, providing a common digital structure enabling laws, amendments, and cross-references to be identified, searched, and electronically linked. The Profile was built by structuring around 980 primary laws, following detailed consultation.

PDA and the Ministry plan to progressively digitize all Paki-



stani legislation into a consolidated record. PDA Chairperson Dr. Sohail Munir called it a foundational reform improving access to legal information, regulatory

clarity, and government transparency. Citizens will benefit from easier searchability across currently scattered legal documents, while government bodies

can better trace obligations and eliminate outdated or duplicate provisions. Businesses stand to gain from a clearer, more predictable regulatory environment with reduced compliance costs.

The reform could support areas like business registration, licensing, taxation, and energy regulation. Following endorsement, PDA and the Ministry have begun engaging regulators—including SBP, FBR, SECP, CCP, NEPRA, and OGRA—on applying Machine-Readable Legislation. Part of the National Digital Master Plan, the initiative will proceed through regulatory use cases and phased adoption, laying groundwork for Pakistan's broader digital reform backbone.

Sumblina Hassan Calls for Transparency in New Provinces Debate

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD/UK: Secretary to Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto and former Consultant Foreign Office, Islamabad, Sumblina Hassan has welcomed the call for parliamentary debate on governance reforms and the proposed creation of new administrative units.

She said the people are entitled to know the source and rationale behind initiating such an important national debate, including who raised the question, why it was raised at this stage and what specific governance problems are being



addressed. Sumblina Hassan said Parlia-

ment is the appropriate forum for such a discussion, where elected representatives can openly examine the proposal, its constitutional implications and its potential impact on the provinces.

She appreciated PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari's call for parliamentary debate, saying that major decisions concerning the country's administrative structure should be discussed transparently through democratic and constitutional forums.

She added that meaningful consultation with political parties, elected representatives and the public is essential

 Bull & Bears

PSX 100-Share Index Fluctuation

Pakistan: PSX 100-Share Index	
Current	Prev. Close
169,043.19	168,021.80
Day's High	Day's Low
169,576.52	168,222.91
Index Value	Change
13,474,387,451	+ 1021.39
Percentage	Time
+0.61%	17 Sept, 2026 4:30 pm
Europe: FTSE 100 Index	
Index Value	Change
10,816.14	+ 127.67
Percentage	Time
+ 1.19%	17 Sept, 4:35 pm GMT +1
USA: Dow Jones Industrial Average	
Index Value	Change
51,801.41	+ 339.51
Percentage	Time
+0.66%	17 Sept, 1:45 pm GMT-4
Asia Pacific: Nikkei Stocks Average	
Index Value	Change
64,136.25	+ 213.25
Percentage	Time
+0.33%	17 Sept, 3:45 pm GMT +9
Open Market Forex Rates	

Meezan Bank

Continues Blood Donation Drive in Partnership with The Indus Hospital



 Commerce Desk

KARACHI: Meezan Bank, Pakistan's premier Islamic bank, once again partnered with The Indus Hospital & Health Network (IHNN), a major nationwide, non-profit healthcare system in Pakistan, to host a two-day Blood Donation Drive, reaffirming the Bank's long-standing commitment to community healthcare. The initiative is part of a recurring series of donation drives the Bank has organized in collaboration with IHNN, reflecting a sustained institutional focus on public health rather than a one-time gesture.

Employees across the Bank volunteered to donate blood, in support of patients receiving free-of-cost treatment at IHNN, one of Pakistan's largest providers of charitable healthcare. Each donor underwent general health screening and blood group testing administered by the Hospital's medical team, with individual health reports shared directly with participants; giving employees a tangible health benefit alongside their contribution.

The drive represents a broader principle in Meezan Bank's approach to corporate social responsibility: that sustainable community impact is built through consistency, not isolated events. By embedding initiatives like blood donation into its regular calendar, the Bank aims to create a dependable resource for institutions like The Indus Hospital, while fostering a culture of civic participation among its own employees.

Meezan Bank continues to explore avenues for deepening its engagement in public health and social welfare, with further collaborative initiatives planned across its network.

LIIBS 2026 Concludes with Framework on ‘The Next Move’ for Pakistan’s Economy

 Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: The 9th edition of the Leaders in Islamabad Business Summit (LIIBS) 2026, themed “The Next Move,” concluded with policymakers, global business leaders, and thought leaders committing to decisive action to convert Pakistan's economic potential into sustained advantage.

Finance Minister Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb noted 3.7% GDP growth last fiscal year, with momentum continuing amid manufacturing recovery, strong remittances, and IT exports, stressing the need to shift beyond consumption-led growth toward sustainable, productive growth. Privatisation Adviser Muhammad Ali emphasized Pakistan must become a technology creator rather than just a consumer, calling for stronger education, workforce participation, and skills development for cities and youth. Minister of State Bilal Azhar Kayani highlighted the need for structural reforms, federal-provincial govern-



ance alignment, reduced reliance on IMF loans, increased exports, and private-sector coordination, citing reduced super taxes and support for agriculture and SMEs.

In the Closing Session, former Caretaker PM Anwar-ul-Haq Kakar argued Paki-

stan's economic constraints, not just security challenges, require structural fixes. Climate Change Minister Dr. Musadik Malik criticized elite capture, calling for merit-based, consensus-driven policies.

The Summit featured six sessions covering geopolitics, business and technology, AI and digital transformation, capital and finance, and Pakistan's strategic choices, with prominent speakers from ACCA, Coca-Cola, JazzWorld, IFC, UNDP, BASF, SAP, PTCL, S&P Global, and other organizations. Attendees received copies of “Syed Babar Ali: A Centennial Tribute” by Muhammad Azfar Ahsan.

Sessions explored investment confidence, climate resilience, business adaptation, technology-driven productivity, capital mobilization, and financial market strengthening. The summit concluded that Pakistan's opportunity lies in acting decisively on reforms, capital, technology, and partnerships already accessible, rather than waiting for greater certainty.

Leaders in Islamabad Business Summit

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister and Advisor on Privatisation, Muhammad Ali; Minister of State for Finance and Railways, Bilal Azhar Kayani; Chief of Staff and Strategy Officer, VEON Group, Serkan Ozturk; Global Executive Director, ACCA, Lucia Real Martin, Pakistan's Chief of Air Staff (2015-2018), ACM Sohail Aman; President, TCS Holdings, Saira Awan Malik; Former Minister for Investment and Chairman Nutshell Group, Muhammad Azfar Ahsan; and others seen at the inaugural session of the LEADERS IN ISLAMABAD BUSINESS SUMMIT on Thursday.



Mashreq Becomes First Digital Bank to Launch Full Raast P2M Services in Pakistan



 Commerce Desk

KARACHI: Mashreq has become Pakistan's first newly launched digital bank to offer full Raast services, including Raast Person-to-Merchant (P2M) payments, enabling instant transactions for customers and merchants. Launched in August 2026, the service allows merchants to receive payments via Raast QR codes while customers pay through Mashreq's digital chan-

nels, extending across grocery stores, restaurants, retail, and e-commerce. Sole proprietors can open Mashreq NEOBiz accounts to become P2M merchants.

CEO Muhammad Hamayun Sajjad said the focus must shift from access to adoption for digital payments to scale. Raast Payments Pakistan CEO Ahson Bin Saeed compared Pakistan's progress to global examples like Australia's New Payments Platform. State Bank's

Muhammad Imad Uddin highlighted SBP's role in building regulatory foundations for inclusive payments.

Mashreq plans customer/merchant incentives like cashback and rewards, plus Request-to-Pay capabilities for e-commerce. Built on ISO 20022-compliant architecture aligned with SWIFT standards, the platform supports interoperability and security, advancing Pakistan's transition toward a digitally connected, cashless economy.

Federal Minister Hanif Abbasi Visits RCCI, Congratulates Newly Elected Office-Bearers

 Commerce Desk

RAWALPINDI: Federal Minister for Railways Hanif Abbasi visited the Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce & Industry (RCCI), congratulating newly elected office-bearers including President Nausherwan Khalil Khan, Senior Vice President Wasim Aslam, and Vice President Ikram-ur-Reh-

man Abbasi. He was welcomed by outgoing President Usman Shaukat, Group Leader Sohail Altaf, Senior Vice President Khalid Farooq Qazi, and other members.

Abbasi said the new team's sweep of all 20 seats reflected the business community's confidence in RCCI and the Mian Parvez Aslam Group, expressing hope the leader-

ship would actively promote trade and industry. He assured full cooperation from the Ministry of Railways, pledging resources to support business activities and development initiatives. He particularly urged the business community to utilize Pakistan Railways' freight services to ease logistics and boost trade.

Group Leader Sohail Altaf



called the clean sweep both an honor and responsibility, reflecting community trust. The newly elected office-

bearers pledged dedication to strengthening business-government coordination and fostering economic growth

in Rawalpindi. Discussions also covered Railways' role in improving freight connectivity and supporting trade.

FBR Briefs Women Entrepreneurs on Tax Compliance in Rawalpindi

 Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Board of Revenue (FBR), in collaboration with the Rawalpindi Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry, held an awareness session on Wednesday to familiarise women entrepreneurs with tax compliance for FY 2025-26. Chamber members and women entrepreneurs attended the session, conducted by Iqra Shaukat, Deputy Commissioner Inland Revenue at the Regional Tax Office, Islamabad.

The session aimed to improve participants' understanding of their tax obligations and encourage transparent business practices, while offering a direct opportunity to seek guidance from an FBR official. Shaukat briefed attendees on compliance requirements and addressed queries during a question-and-answer session, with participants raising concerns and seeking clarification on their responsibilities as taxpayers.

The event was part of broader efforts to build the capacity of women entrepreneurs and foster a more informed, compliant business community.

Sarfraz Mughal Congratulates Founder Group on Election Victory

 Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Former President of Super Market, Sarfraz Mughal, has congratulated the newly elected Executive Members of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) on behalf of the Shaheen Group Super Market, expressing hope that they will work for the welfare of the business community.

Mughal said it was encouraging that a majority of the newly elected ICCI Executive Members were prominent trader leaders. He also congratulated all senior leaders of the Founder

Group and thanked them for providing trader representatives an opportunity to serve the business community through the ICCI platform.

He specifically congratulated newly elected members including Muhammad Ashfaq Chattha, Syed Imran Bukhari, Syed Altaf Shah, Kamran Kaka Khel, Shahid Abbasi and Chaudhry Sohail Ashraf.

Mughal expressed confidence that the elected representatives, under the guidance of the Founder Group, would effectively raise traders' concerns and contribute to resolving their issues.

CCP Chairman Represents Pakistan at SCO Anti-Monopoly Authorities Meeting

 Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: CCP Chairman Farid Ahmad Tarar represented Pakistan virtually at the SCO Heads of Antimonopoly Authorities Meeting in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, attended by member states includ-

ing China, Russia, India, and Iran. He stressed that SCO economic cooperation should rest on open, transparent, fair markets benefiting consumers through competition, and called for regional cooperation against cross-border cartels and digital-market challenges.

MCCI Election 2026-28

Friends of Multan Sweeps All 24 Seats, Ending 67-Year Chamber Reign

Asim Tanveer

MULTAN: A transfer of power has taken place at the Multan Chamber of Commerce and Industry after 67 years. The “Friends of Multan” group—led by Mian Faisal Mukhtar, a former Nazim of Multan and Chairman of the Fatima Fertilizer Group and Chaudhry Zulfiqar Anjum Group—secured a historic victory by winning all 24 seats across the Corporate and Associate sectors. Meanwhile, the “Founder Group,” which had held power in the Chamber for a long period, was completely

routed, failing to secure even a single seat. The electoral dominance of the group that had led the Chamber since its inception in 1959 came to an end after 67 years; “Friends of Multan” made history by achieving a 24-0 victory, thereby reshaping the Chamber’s electoral landscape. Candidates successful in the 12 Corporate sector seats included Nadeem Ahmed Sheikh, Sheikh Fazal Elahi, Khawaja Riaz Hussain Siddiqui, Hussain Ahmed Fazal, Dr. Muhammad Shafiq Khan Patafi, Sheikh Imran Arshad, Muhammad Aslam Bhatta, Mohi-ud-Din

Aurangzeb Alamgir, Muhammad Bilal Ahmed Sheikh, Khawaja Muhammad Umar, Mahboob Elahi, and Muhammad Aslam. In the Associate sector, the 12 successful candidates were Abdul Wahab, Khawaja Muhammad Nabeel, Azhar Mumtaz, Chaudhry Tariq Karim, Nawab Atif Ashfaq, Hammad Ahmed Mian, Hafiz Umair Saeed, Mirza Shahid Hussain, Muhammad Shahzad Karim, Sheikh Muhammad Tahir, Hafiz Tariq Bashir Chaudhry, and Hassan Iqbal. As soon as the results were announced, a festive atmosphere took over the election venue;



supporters of ‘Friends of Multan’ danced to the beat of drums, raised spirited slogans, garlanded the successful candidates, and hoisted them onto their shoulders in celebration, all while exchanging congratulations. Following this remarkable

success for ‘Friends of Multan,’ a new political and electoral alignment has emerged within the Multan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, paving the way for the group to assume the Chamber’s future leadership. The election results are being viewed as

a sign of significant change within the business community; however, the Chamber’s future administrative direction will be determined following the selection of new office-bearers and the formation of the new leadership team.

Following Uswa-e-Rasool ﷺ Key to Addressing Humanity’s Challenges: Dr. Ehsan Bhutta



Bureau Report

LAHORE: Secretary/Chief Administrator Auqaf Punjab Dr. Ehsan Bhutta said that sustainable solutions to humanity’s challenges lie in following the Holy Prophet Muhammad’s ﷺ life and teachings. He urged the Muslim Ummah to promote research and intellectual inquiry rooted in the Qur’an and Sunnah, stressing that a profound understanding of the Qur’an is essential for nations to achieve dignity and influence. He emphasized that education, scholarly inquiry, and practical emulation of Seerat-e-Tayyaba ﷺ must be collective priorities for a progressive society. Dr. Bhutta noted that, per the Chief Minister

Punjab’s directions, efforts continue to connect youth with Qur’an and Sunnah, with the 41st Provincial Hifz and Qirat Competitions reflecting this commitment. He said the Auqaf Department would continue such character-building programmes, adding that genuine engagement with the Qur’an requires understanding and practicing its teachings, not just recitation. At the concluding session held at Khatam-un-Nabiyin University, Lahore, Dr. Bhutta distributed certificates and cash prizes to winners across Hifz-ul-Qur’an categories (Muhammad Umar, Muhammad, Muhammad Aqib, Muhammad Aftab) and Qirat categories (Muhammad Shoaib, Faiz-ul-Hassan).

Ahsan Bakhtawari Felicitates New ICCI Leadership Following Landslide Victory in 2026-28 Elections

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, Patron-in-Chief of the Azerbaijan-Pakistan Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry and former President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), has congratulated the newly elected Executive Members and the leadership of the Founder Group on securing all 28 general seats in the Associate and Corporate Classes in the ICCI Elections 2026-28. Congratulating the newly elected Executive Members, Ahsan Zafar

Bakhtawari appreciated the efforts of Founder Group Chairman Sheikh Tariq Sadiq and Council Members Khalid Javed, Abdul Rauf Alam, Mian Akram Farid, Zubair Ahmed Malik, Shaukat Masood, Khalid Iqbal Malik, Zafar Bakhtawari, Chaudhry Waheed-ud-Din, Sheikh Amir Waheed, Ijaz Abbasi and Masood Chaudhry. He also congratulated the successful candidates from the Associate Class: Umar Hussain Malik, Muhammad Zakaria Akbar Zia, Muhammad Waqqas Khan, M. Abbas Hashmi, Syed Imran Bukhari, Israr-ul-Haq, Zohaib



Arshad Malik, Syed Altaf Hussain Shah, Rana Ishtikhar Ahmed Khan, Muhammad Nauman, Mian

Kamran Ali Shah Kakakhel, Malik Rashid Tufail, Mazhar Hussain and Shahid Hussain Abbasi. Similarly, he extended his congratulations to the successful Corporate Class candidates: M. Ashfaq Hussain Chattha, Chaudhry Mukhtar Ahmed, Muhammad Arif, Sheikh Iftikhar Anwar Sethi, Shamim Ahmed Khan, Abrar-ul-Haq, Muhammad Fawad Sehgal, Shoaib Zafar, Usman Abdul Nasir, Muhammad Khursheed, Chaudhry Muhammad Usman, M. Habib-ul-Haq, Bilal Sohail Siddiqui and M. Sohail Chaudhry.

Match officials announced for Women’s U19 T20 tri-series

Abdul Majid

FAISALABD: ICC International Panel of Umpires Saleema Imtiaz will serve as an on-field umpire during the Women’s U19 T20 tri-series as Pakistan Crick-

et Board (PCB) announced the match officials for the tournament, which will be played at Iqbal Stadium in Faisalabad from 2 to 16 October. The tournament will feature hosts Pakistan alongside Bang-

ladesh and Sri Lanka, with the top two teams progressing to the final on 16 October. All matches are scheduled to begin at 10am. Bilal Khilji (PCB National Elite Panel) will serve as match referee for the first five matches

of the competition from 2 to 8 October, while Iftikhar Ahmed also part of PCB National Elite Panel will lead the playing control team for the remaining four league matches and the final.

Beyond the Declaration: Xi Jinping’s Vision for BRICS and the Global South

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realities. Influence, after all, follows cohesion. A fragmented Global South will struggle to shape the future; a coordinated one can become a rule-maker rather than merely a rule-taker. Ultimately, Xi’s speech reflected an understanding that the international system is undergoing profound transformation. The future relevance of BRICS will depend less on its capacity to challenge existing powers than on its ability to offer practical solutions to shared global challenges. Its success will be measured not by rhetoric but by tangible benefits delivered to developing nations seeking a more equitable share of global opportunity. The summit’s broader message was unmistakable: the Global South is no longer merely seeking a seat at the table; it is increasingly helping

redesign the table itself. While the New Delhi Declaration captured the spirit of cooperation, Xi’s address reached further, envisioning a BRICS that shapes technological innovation, advances more representative governance and converts economic weight into institutional influence. In that endeavour, BRICS may emerge as one of the most consequential platforms of the twenty-first century, provided it remains committed to inclusiveness, cooperation and shared development. The vision has been articulated; the challenge now is to translate it into measurable achievement. The writer is a retired Group Captain of the Pakistan Air Force (PAF). He is a columnist, analyst, and TV talk show host who has authored 16 books on current affairs, including ten on China.

Nation backs armed forces to surmount internal, external challenges

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At the same time, economic pressures cannot always be attributed exclusively to domestic policy. International energy markets, regional conflicts, global economic conditions and Pakistan’s own fiscal circumstances all influence prices and public finances. The government’s challenge is to manage these pressures while protecting ordinary citizens from excessive hardship. The protests announced by Jamaat-e-Islami against petroleum prices and inflation, as well as Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf’s call for protest on September 27, should be viewed within the democratic framework. Their demands and political positions can be debated through constitutional and peaceful means. The important consideration is that political protest should not unnecessarily compromise public order, the rights of ordinary citizens or national security. The situation in Poonch and Sudhnoti in Azad Jammu and Kashmir, particularly around Rawalakot and Pallandri, also deserves attention in this wider

context. Raising one’s voice for public rights is a democratic right. At the same time, respect for the rule of law, peaceful protest and protection of citizens and property are equally important. Where allegations involving weapons, violence or organised networks arise, their truth should be established through transparent investigation and due process rather than political slogans or speculation. It would neither be accurate nor responsible to portray every development as part of a single chain or conspiracy. Yet it is equally necessary to recognise the difficult environment in which these events are occurring. Pakistan is already dealing with terrorism, regional tensions and increasing responsibilities on both the diplomatic and security fronts. A fundamental distinction must therefore be maintained: national security does not mean surrendering citizens’ rights, just as citizens’ rights do not mean disregarding national security. Peaceful protest, political disagreement and demands for economic relief are legitimate. So are the responsibilities

to obey the law, protect public property and safeguard the lives and livelihoods of fellow citizens. Supporting the armed forces and security institutions does not necessarily mean supporting a particular government or political party. It means recognising the sacrifices of those confronting terrorism and other security threats. At the same time, state institutions must operate within the constitutional and legal framework, listen to legitimate grievances, favour dialogue where possible and subject serious allegations to transparent investigation. Pakistan does not need political confrontation to produce winners and losers. It needs stability, tolerance and institutional harmony. The government must address public hardship; political parties must keep disagreement within constitutional and peaceful channels; citizens must remember both their rights and responsibilities; and state institutions must perform their duties within their constitutional domains. We should neither regard every protest as rebellion nor assume that every state

action is beyond question. The real challenge is to maintain a responsible balance between rights and duties, freedom and responsibility, protest and law, and politics and national security. Our armed forces are performing their duties at the frontiers, security personnel are confronting terrorism, Pakistan’s military leadership is engaged in complex regional diplomacy, and the government is attempting to manage difficult economic circumstances. At such a moment, political leadership and citizens alike have a responsibility to prevent internal disagreements from becoming another source of national vulnerability. Difficult circumstances do not last forever. Economic pressures can ease, political differences can be resolved and avenues for dialogue can always be found. What matters is that, during difficult moments, our differences do not overwhelm the larger interests of national security, stability and public welfare. This is not a time to defeat one another. It is a time to strengthen Pakistan. That is our shared national responsibility.

US Congress Impeaches Hegseth over Illegal War with Iran

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Iran has now become central to the impeachment effort against Hegseth. Whether he survives politically or is removed, the charges threaten his standing. An official subjected to such scrutiny can suffer lasting damage among the public, international counterparts, colleagues, subordinates, and supporters. The same exposure may ultimately confront the president. Here lies an essential strength of the American constitutional system: the executive can be called to account when it exceeds its lawful authority. Congress’s

role in decisions concerning war cannot be displaced simply because the president commands the armed forces. Constitutional responsibility must remain meaningful when its exercise becomes politically difficult. The administration’s declaration that the war had ended makes its subsequent conduct particularly troubling. The president and Hegseth communicated that position to Congress, yet military operations continued. Their own description of the situation did not bring the fighting to an end. More lives were lost, while expensive ammunition, missiles, and military systems continued

to be consumed or destroyed without delivering the promised objectives. The impeachment effort therefore comes at an important moment. It may provide the jolt necessary to confront the administration with the consequences of its decisions. Leaders who have become absorbed in their own assertions of power must recognize the reality on the ground. Iran cannot simply be defeated according to Washington’s preferred timetable or compelled to accept whatever outcome the administration demands. The responsible course is to return to the pre-war position and

address the destruction caused by the United States and Israel, including compensation for Iran. Continuing a destructive policy to avoid acknowledging failure only deepens the damage. Such a change would not diminish the United States or erase its standing as a superpower. It would reaffirm the capacity to recognize mistakes, correct policy, and restore constitutional discipline. National strength includes the ability to reconsider a course that has failed and to measure conduct against principles more enduring than any administration. Whether the impeachment

effort succeeds or fails, its central challenge remains: American power must answer to the Constitution. The country’s credibility ultimately depends on its willingness to correct its course and uphold the cherished values of human dignity, human honor, and civility. Any honest assessment must also preserve historical sequence and equal standards. Retaliation cannot be understood fully when the preceding action is omitted. American and Israeli operations require scrutiny alongside Iranian responses, including their purposes, scale, and consequences.

Proportionality demands attention to specific conduct and civilian harm. Iranian lives possess the same human worth as American lives. Military superiority cannot confer an unrestricted entitlement to inflict destruction, and national allegiance should not determine whose suffering deserves recognition or whose actions require justification. Human dignity, human honor, and civility belong within this debate. Officials can oppose a government without humiliating its population or speaking casually about suffering. The credibility of the United States depends partly on whether its leaders uphold the values they invoke. Whether Hegseth’s impeachment effort succeeds or fails, it presses an essential demand upon the American government—that executive power answer to law, military decisions withstand scrutiny, and leadership remain grounded in the cherished values of human dignity, human honor, and civility. The writer is (Rtd.) Press Secretary to the President, Former Press Minister at the Embassy of Pakistan to France, Former Press Attaché to Malaysia, and Former MD, SRBC. He resides in Michigan, USA.

Meeting

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a review meeting on progress of Danish University on Thursday.



Photo: PID

Daanish University to Emerge as Regional Centre of Excellence: PM; Classes from Next Sept

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday expressed hope that Daanish University being constructed in the federal capital would emerge as a regional centre of excellence in technology due to its premier academic and research infrastructure, set to go operational by September next year.

Chairing a high-level review meeting, the PM reaffirmed that providing quality, modern and merit-based education to deserving youth is the government's priority. Admissions will strictly follow a nationwide merit policy.

The meeting was briefed that 185 applications have been received so far for faculty selection. A talent hunt has begun for second-year F. Sc. and A-Levels students for Daanish University's Virtual School, offering 100% free five-month classes after an entry test on October 24, 2026 across over 40 cities.

Campus building will be completed next year, with a bridge program from August 10 to September 14, 2027, and formal session from September 20, 2027. Initial disciplines include bio-engineering, electrical engineering, AI, computer science, technology and social sciences.

New Provinces & Admin Units Need of the Hour: Abdul Aleem Khan



Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Communications and IPP President Abdul Aleem Khan was called on by Federal Minister for Religious Affairs Sardar Muhammad Yousaf. The meeting discussed formation of new provinces and administrative units and the prevailing national and political situation. Sardar Yousaf thanked Aleem Khan for supporting the creation of Hazara Province in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and appreciated his stance on new provinces. Abdul Aleem Khan said the issue is not about dividing provinces but

improving administrative organization. Creation of new administrative units in all four provinces is the need of the hour to deliver basic facilities at doorsteps. He said the existing provincial system has failed to provide public services at required level and Pakistan is stuck with a decades-old structure while the world progresses. He stressed focus should be on solving public problems, ensuring education, healthcare and basic necessities, and called for healthy dialogue among political forces. Both ministers expressed hope that ongoing positive debate would soon lead to constructive development.

Qaiser Sheikh, US Chargé d'Affaires Discuss Pakistan-US Economic Cooperation

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Board of Investment Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh held a meeting with US Chargé d'Affaires Natalie Baker at BOI to discuss bilateral economic cooperation, trade and investment.

Welcoming Baker, Sheikh said Pakistan attaches great importance to ties with the US and his priority is facilitating investors. He highlighted cooperation in trade, technology, energy, agriculture, healthcare and education.

He informed about his upcoming participation in WEF Sustainable Development Impact Meetings 2026 (SDIM26) in New York from Sept 21-24.

He announced intention to host a dinner in her honour and to convey appreciation of her performance to

US President Donald Trump.

Baker appreciated BOI's regulatory reforms. Total US-Pakistan trade in goods and services was estimated at \$11.5 billion in 2025.

Sheikh highlighted investment opportunities in mining, critical minerals, energy, refinery moderni-



zation, agri-tech, IT, healthcare and franchising. He said 550+ reforms are being pursued. The Business Facilitation Centre in Islamabad facilitated Rs 6.6 billion investment and 20,000 jobs in its first year.

Both sides agreed to continue engagement.

Pakistan Bar Council Expresses Concern Over Continuous Rise in Oil Prices

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Bar Council has expressed concern over the continuous rise in petroleum prices and demanded immediate measures to provide relief to the public.

A joint meeting of the Council's Executive and Rules Committees, chaired by Vice Chairman Pir Muhammad Masood Chishti and Executive Committee Chairman Munir A. Malik, adopted a resolution stating higher fuel prices are

increasing the cost of essential goods and pressuring purchasing power of ordinary citizens, particularly middle and lower-middle classes.

The resolution called for eliminating unnecessary perks, excessive remuneration packages, free fuel and unnecessary use of official vehicles, along with reducing expenditures of ministers and government officials.

The Council also rejected the proposal for a "smart lockdown," saying it would further burden daily-wage workers, ordinary citizens and the business community.

Govt, petroleum dealers reach deal on relief package, deadlock ends

Naveed Ahmad Khan

ISLAMABAD: The federal government and petroleum dealers have reached an agreement on the payment mechanism for the prime minister's petrol relief package, ending a standoff that had threatened the scheme's implementation nationwide.

Talks between government officials and representatives of petroleum dealers were held in Islamabad on Thursday, after which both sides confirmed the deadlock had been resolved.

The Pakistan Petroleum Dealers Association (PPDA)



said dealers had begun implementing the relief package following the successful talks.

Under the agreement, payments to dealers will be

transferred to their bank accounts through the State Bank of Pakistan within 48 hours, and a payment portal has already been established.

The PPDA said a formal notification on the payment procedure would be issued shortly.

Petroleum Minister Ali Pervaiz Malik assured the dealers that stakeholder consultation would be strengthened going forward.

PPDA information secretary Aziz Khan said the government had reaffirmed that funds would be released within 48 hours under a pre-agreed formula.

The meeting was attended by PPDA leadership including Malik Khuda Bakhsh, Tariq Hassan, Anwar Kamal and

Malik Sher Khan, with PPDA Sindh president Ameer Khan joining via Zoom and PPDA Punjab vice chairman Raja Wasim also present.

All Pakistan Petrol Pump Owners Association Vice Chairman Nauman Ali Butt separately confirmed the talks had succeeded, saying the government had committed to returning subsidy funds within 24 hours through the State Bank.

He said dealers had no objection to the fuel subsidy scheme itself, only to the reimbursement mechanism, which the government has now addressed.

Palestine Rejects Extension of US Visa Restrictions on its Officials

Spokesman Report

RAMLA: The State of Palestine's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates has rejected the US decision to extend visa restrictions against Palestinian Authority officials and members of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), calling the measures unjustified.

The ministry said such actions undermine efforts to rebuild trust, strengthen Palestinian-American relations, and advance the two-state solution. It reaffirmed commitment to peace, international law, UN resolutions, and a state based on



June 4, 1967 borders.

Rejecting US claims, it stressed that pursuing Pales-

tinian rights through the United Nations and international courts is a legitimate and peaceful means and does not undermine peace.

International recognition of Palestine is not a substitute for negotiations but an affirmation of the right to self-determination, it said, highlighting substantial reforms undertaken by the Palestinian government and urging assessment based on facts.

The ministry called on the US administration to reverse restrictions, engage in serious dialogue, and support implementation of UN resolutions and the New York Declaration for a just and lasting peace.

CM Maryam Nawaz Inaugurates Multan Electric Bus Service

Asim Tanveer

MULTAN: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif inaugurated Multan's electric bus service, boarding an e-bus from the stop at Agro Mall on Shujaabad Road and traveling to a ceremony at Muhammad Nawaz Sharif University of Agriculture. She received an enthusiastic public welcome along Old Shujaabad Road, with thousands of children, youth, students, and elderly residents gathering to greet her amid showers of rose petals and children carrying flowers and pictures.

The Chief Minister formally launched the e-bus project digitally at the ceremony, which was marked by continuous



celebratory slogans. Provincial Transport Minister Bilal Akbar detailed the project, noting that 45 electric buses will operate in Multan during the first phase, covering routes including Vehari Chowk to Nishtar Hospital, Ghanta Ghar to Ibn-e-Sina Hospital, Dera Adda via DHA to Women University/e-Khidmat Centre, and Chungi No. 9 to Nag Shah/NADRA Abad Phatak. Additional routes will connect Vehari Chowk to Qasim Bela and Ghanta Ghar to Qadirpur Raan.

Overall, 160 electric buses will serve various cities and areas within Multan Division in the first phase, with plans to expand to a total of 205 electric buses operating across the entire division.