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Trump vows to make 'permanent' deal with Iran, prevent future nuclear ambitions

WEB DESK

WASHINGTON

United States President Donald Trump has said that he intends to secure a "permanent" deal with Iran, insisting that no future American president should be able to allow Tehran to obtain a nuclear weapon. said his approach was shaped by what he described as Iran's repeated failure to honor agreements.

"We make a deal, and then they break the deal the next day," he said, arguing that any new agreement must prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons regardless of who occupies the White House in the coming years.

"What I'm doing is I'm going to make it so that if we have an incompetent president in four years or 15 years or 20 years, I wouldn't make a deal that is going to be permanent," Trump said.

He added that he would not allow a future administration to reverse course and permit Iran to acquire a nuclear weapon.



Punjab minister lists govt steps to control air pollution

STAFF REPORTER

LAHORE

Punjab Senior Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb on Sunday said that the provincial government had taken measures to improve environment in the province, She said that the environment is being monitored through an Air-Quality Index (AQI).

She further stated that 80 monitoring systems are already installed in the province.

Marriyum said that urgent measures are being taken to dispose of the waste of burning crops residue.She said that smog is not a climate challenge rather it is environment, scientific and healthy challenge.

The minister urged people to ensure safety measures and wear masks outside their homes.



Referendum on new provinces likely early next year, Khawaja Asif

STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD

Interior Minister Syed Mohsin Naqvi visited the NADRA's office at Peco Road in Lahore on Sunday and listened to the problems of the people present there, He ordered the NADRA officials to immediately resolve the issues confronting the visitors, especially the elderly. Expressing their satisfaction over the completion of the process at a brisk pace, citizens present at the center said now it took only 15 minutes, while same was not the situation two years ago when they had to wait for two hours. Naqvi ordered the NADRA officials to guide the citizens so that they did not confront any problem.

He said that the provision of speedy and best services to people was his mission.

He appreciated the NADRA center in-charge and staffers for making best arrangements despite rush. He said that the feedback he received today was very good.



Federal Minister for Petroleum Ali Pervaiz Malik and Minister of Energy and Minerals of Oman Eng. Salim Al Aufi witnessing the signing of a Sale and Purchase Agreement (SPA) for petroleum products between Pakistan State Oil Company Limited (PSO) and OQ Trading (OQT).

15 militants killed in two security operations in Balochistan's Mastung

Several terrorist hideouts destroyed, large cache of weapons and ammunition recovered in operations, say sources

STAFF REPORTER

QUETTA

Security forces have killed 15 terrorists in two separate operations conducted under "Operation Rad-ul-Fitna-3" against "Fitna al-Hindustan" in Mastung district of Balochistan,

According to the security sources, five terrorists were killed in the first operation, while 10 others were eliminated in the second in different areas of Mastung.Several terrorist hideouts were destroyed during the operations, while a large cache of weapons and ammunition was also recovered, the sources added.

Security forces also cleared the areas of Killi Pasand Khan, Musa Khan, Khorasani, and Kaftari of terrorists.



They said the security forces remain committed to eradicating terrorism from Balochistan, and operations will continue until the last terrorist is eliminated.

Pakistan has witnessed a surge in terror activities, particularly in its Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Balochistan provinces, since 2021, when the Afghan Taliban came into power.

According to a report by the Centre for Research and Security Studies (CRSS), the two provinces remained the country's main hotspots for violence during the second quarter of 2026, with KP emerging as the worst-affected region.

The report stated that KP and Balochistan together accounted for nearly 96% of all violence-related fatalities recorded during the quarter. Of the total deaths, more than 61% (475) were reported in KP, while Balochistan accounted for 34% (265). KP also recorded the highest number of violent incidents, with 151 cases, representing 57% of the nationwide total. Balochistan followed with 94 incidents, or 35%, underscoring the concentration of militant activity in the two provinces.

PM Shehbaz to undertake three-day official visit to Russia from November 30



OUR CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif will undertake a three-day official visit to Russia from November 30, during which he is expected to hold an important meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin to discuss bilateral relations and cooperation in key sectors.

According to sources, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif will depart for Moscow on November 30. He will visit Russia at the invitation of President Vladimir Putin.

We will not allow ethnic violence in Pakistan says Mustafa Kamal

OUR CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD

Federal Minister for Health and MQM-P leader Mustafa Kamal has said that the creation of new provinces is essential for Pakistan's development and security, arguing that population growth and the lack of basic facilities are paralysing the country administratively and economically, Addressing a youth convention in Johar Town and a public gathering organised by the Pashtun Tribes Movement in North Nazimabad Town, Mustafa Kamal said the establishment of new provinces would provide better educational and employment opportunities to young people in different regions.

Rana Sanaullah calls referendum the only solution to creation of new provinces

■ Rana Sanaullah has called a referendum the only solution to the contentious issue of new provinces, saying the matter should be decided through public opinion.

STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD

Prime Minister's Adviser on Political Affairs Rana Sanaullah has said that holding a referendum is the only solution to the contentious issue of creating new provinces, stressing that the matter should be left to the people.

Speaking during a private television programme, Rana Sanaullah said the issue of new provinces had become so controversial that directly seeking public opinion appeared to be the most appropriate way forward.

He said there should be no objection to seeking the people's views on the matter in the context of the country's current crisis. A referendum could help determine public opinion on the establishment of new provinces,



he added.

Rana Sanaullah maintained that since the issue had been made politically controversial to such an extent, it would be appropriate to let the people decide through their vote.

The prime minister's adviser also referred to Pakistan Peoples Party Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari's remarks about rivers of blood being shed over the referendum issue.

He added that, on the other hand, certain circles were claiming that 83 per cent of the country's population supported the creation of new provinces.

Climate change poses major threat to Pakistan's civilisation and heritage, Musadik Malik

■ Musadik Malik says climate change threatens Pakistan's historical heritage, citing the 2022 floods and damage to 4,500-year-old Mohenjo Daro ruins caused by heavy rainfall.

NEWS REPORTER

ISLAMABAD



Federal Minister for Climate Change Dr Musadik Malik has warned that climate change has emerged as a major threat to Pakistan's civilisation and historical heritage, highlighting the damage caused by extreme weather events to the country's ancient archaeological sites.Speaking about the devastating 2022 floods, Musadik Malik said approximately 1,700 people lost their lives in the disaster, while large parts of Sindh remained submerged under floodwater.He said that record rainfall was recorded in Larkana in August 2022, affecting the ancient ruins of Mohenjo Daro. Heavy downpours caused several walls of the approximately 4,500-year-old archaeological site to collapse, highlighting the growing threat climate change poses to the country's historical heritage.The minister said Pakistan's land had been home to ancient civilisations, including the Indus Valley and Gandhara civilisations. He added that several historical civilisations and archaeological sites were located in and around Islamabad. Gandhara's Buddhist architecture had travelled through the Silk Road to Central Asia and China, he said.

Naqvi warns fellow minister against repeated criticism

● Hits back at fellow minister and defends businessmen, describing them as among Pakistan's highest taxpayers

STAFF REPORTER

LAHORE

Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi on Sunday warned a fellow member of the cabinet against repeatedly criticising him, saying the minister would not be able to show his face if he responded to the remarks, Speaking informally to journalists in Lahore, Naqvi, who did not name the minister, said he had been patiently listening to the latter's comments for the past two and a half years.

Defending the businessmen who have come under criticism, he said they were respectable citizens who had served as presidents and office-bearers of chambers of commerce at the federal and city levels.Naqvi said the businessmen were among the country's highest taxpayers and



questioned why political parties collected billions of rupees from them in the name of party funding during every election if they were considered so bad.His remarks come amid criticism of Naqvi following his proposal for a new governance system and the creation of new provinces. In July this year, addressing the Pakistan Economic Summit 2026 in Islamabad, he had argued that the country's existing governance model had effectively "collapsed" after decades of failing to deliver. He had said decentralisation was essential to improve public services, ensure timely justice and create opportunities for young people.

The next day, Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) Director General Lt Gen Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry also appeared to endorse Naqvi's call, saying an administrative reset, if required,

(Continued on Page-5)

should be undertaken to ensure good governance. Naqvi's proposals drew mixed reactions, with several Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leaders criticising him and describing him as one of the beneficiaries of the existing system.Among them was PML-N leader and Prime Minister's Adviser Rana Sanaullah, who questioned how Naqvi could criticise the current political system after rising to the office of interior minister through the same system in just three and a half years.

However, Defence Minister Khawaja Asif, also a PML-N leader, took a different position from his party colleague, saying he largely agreed with the interior minister's assessment.

"Mohsin Naqvi expressed his views on the system's shortcomings. Personally, I largely agree with these views," the minister said in a post on X. He, however, said that if the objective was to strengthen the system and bring about fundamental change, the appropriate forum for such a debate was parliament — of which Naqvi is a member — or the federal cabinet.

Pakistani Investors to Visit Germany in January 2027, Announces Euro Asia Ventures

■ Business leaders explore investment opportunities in retail, real estate, hospitality, solar energy and logistics; Sardar Tahir Mahmood stresses stronger economic ties between Pakistan and Germany

STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD

Euro Asia Ventures hosted a business networking and investment session at Islamabad Club to promote Pakistan-Germany economic cooperation and introduce Pakistani business leaders to investment opportunities in Germany.The event was hosted by Muhammad Shahzad Zia, CEO of Euro Asia Ventures, and attended by prominent Pakistani business personalities. Sardar Tahir Mahmood, former President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry, was the chief guest.Addressing the gathering, Sardar Tahir Mahmood highlighted Germany's position as one of Europe's leading economic powers and a major global business hub. He said investment in Germany could enable Pakistani entrepreneurs to expand their businesses internationally, access European markets and strengthen commercial ties between the two friendly countries. He also



emphasized the role of the private sector in turning longstanding Pakistan-Germany relations into stronger economic partnerships.During the session, Euro Asia Ventures presented investment opportunities in Germany across several sectors, including retail and supermarkets, hotels and hospitality, residential and commercial real estate, solar energy, logistics and warehousing. According to the company's investment portfolio, projects range from €500,000 to €20 million, with options for full ownership or business partnerships.The proposed investment opportunities offer potential monthly income in euros, rental-based returns and support for company establishment, legal and tax matters. The programme also outlines possible residence permit options for company owners and their families, subject to German immigration laws and approval by the relevant authorities.A key announcement at the event was that Euro Asia Ventures is preparing to take a delegation of Pakistani investors to Germany in January 2027. The delegation will meet local investors and business partners, visit investment projects and explore opportunities for business expansion and joint ventures.German-based investors and legal experts also joined the session through video link, briefed participants on investment procedures and legal requirements, and invited Pakistani entrepreneurs to explore business opportunities in Germany.

They assured prospective investors of their cooperation and support.The session concluded with an interactive question-and-answer discussion covering investment procedures, business partnerships, legal protection, potential returns and residency-related matters.

Mughal Community Delegation Visits Burlas House to Offer Condolences

STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD

A representative delegation of the Mughal community from Rawalpindi and Islamabad, under the platform of Tanzeem Mughlia Markaz Pakistan, visited Burlas House in Islamabad to offer condolences to prominent journalist, columnist and anchorperson Mazhar Burlas over the demise of his elder brother and sister-in-law.The delegation expressed heartfelt condolences to Mazhar Burlas and other members of the bereaved family and conveyed their sympathies over the tragic loss.The condolence delegation included Baig Raj, Dr. Hanif Mughal, Sarfraz Mughal, Umar Mughal, Ghulam Hussain Mughal, Atif Mughal, Ghazanfar Ali Mirza, Waqar Fani Mughal and Zubair Baig.Ammar Burlas and Ali Wahid Burlas, the heir apparent, were also present on the occasion.The delegation members expressed solidarity with the bereaved family, saying they shared their grief and sorrow during this difficult time. They prayed for the departed souls to rest in eternal peace and for strength and patience for the family to bear the irreparable loss.

SSP Operations Islamabad Reviews Church Security Arrangements During Sunday Field Visit

■ Qazi Ali Raza inspects security deployment at churches, directs officers to ensure foolproof arrangements and calls for public cooperation to maintain peace.



Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD

SSP Operations Islamabad Remains Active in the Field on Sunday, Reviews Church Security Arrangements According to the details, on the special directions of Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Muhammad Sohail Chaudhry, Islamabad Police has taken effective measures to ensure foolproof security at churches across the federal capital.In this regard, SSP Operations Islamabad Qazi Ali Raza remained active in the field on Sunday and visited various churches across the district. He met with police officers and officials deployed on duty, reviewed their performance and issued directions to further improve security arrangements.SSP Operations Islamabad review the overall security plan, including entry and exit points, parking areas and the deployment of police officials in and around the churches. During his meeting with church administrations, he said that Islamabad Police is committed to protecting the lives and property of people of all religions without discrimination.He urged citizens to cooperate with the police and immediately report any suspicious person or activity to the concerned police station or the emergency helpline PUCAR-15.

PCP inspects federal capital's pharmacy institutions

■ The Pharmacy Council of Pakistan (PCP) has intensified regulatory oversight of pharmacy education in the federal capital through



CITY REPORTER

ISLAMABAD

:The Pharmacy Council of Pakistan (PCP) has intensified regulatory oversight of pharmacy education in the federal capital through inspections of three educational institutions.

The objective to visit these institutions was to assess academic facilities, faculty strength, laboratories and compliance with prescribed standards.

A special inspection panel, constituted on the directions of the PCP President, visited the National Excellence Institute (NEI), Iqra University (H-9 Campus) and Bashir Institute of Medical Sciences.

During the inspections, the panel assessed the available academic facilities against the Council's regulatory requirements and identified areas needing improvement.

The institutions were directed to upgrade their laboratories, arrange missing equipment and address the identified deficiencies within the prescribed timeframe.

The inspection team emphasized that maintaining quality standards in pharmacy education was the responsibility of every institution offering pharmacy programmes.

The PCP President reiterated the Council's commitment to strengthening regulatory oversight through regular and surprise inspections to ensure strict compliance with established standards.

The Council reaffirmed its resolve to safeguard academic quality and promote excellence in Doctor of Pharmacy (PharmD) education across the country..

Yousaf Raza Gilani Attends Qul Ceremony of Late Cousin in Multan

■ Political leaders, family members and prominent personalities gather at Al-Mustafa House to offer condolences and prayers for the departed soul.



Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD

Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani attended the Qul ceremony held for the Isal-e-Sawab of his late cousin, Makhdoomzada Syed Ali Raza Gilani, at Al-Mustafa House on Sunday.

The ceremony was attended by Member of the National Assembly Syed Ali Qasim Gilani, Chairman of the Punjab Assembly's Public Accounts Committee and MPA Syed Ali Haider Gilani, the deceased's brothers Makhdoomzada Muhammad Mustafa Gilani and Makhdoomzada Asad Mustafa Gilani, his son Syed Kabeer Gilani, Makhdoom Javed Hashmi, members of the Gilani family, political and social figures, and other distinguished guests.

On the occasion, Allama Mazhar Saeed Kazmi led special prayers for the forgiveness of the deceased and elevation of his ranks in the hereafter. Renowned Naat reciters Hameed Nawaz, Waheed Nawaz and Saeed Nawaz presented devotional tributes in honour of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Allama Farooq Khan Saeedi, Nazim-e-Aala of Jamaat Ahle Sunnat Punjab, also delivered a special address.During the ceremony, Senate Chairman Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani performed the traditional dastarbandi (turban-tying ceremony) of the deceased's son, Syed Kabeer Mustafa Gilani. Prominent attendees included Sajjadah Nashin of the Shrine of Hazrat Musa Pak Shaheed, Makhdoom Syed Abu-ul-Hasan Gilani, Syed Ahmed Mujtaba Gilani, Makhdoom Rajan Bakhsh Gilani, Moeen-ul-Islam Bukhari, Makhdoom Syed Ghulam Mustafa Shah Gilani, Makhdoom Syed Amir Gilani, Makhdoom Hassan Raza Gilani, Makhdoom Syed Imran-ul-Hassan Gilani, Makhdoom Tufail Mohiuddin Gilani, Makhdoom Syed Shafaat Gilani, Makhdoom Ghaus Anwar Gilani, Makhdoom Dr Ghaus Alam Gilani, Makhdoom Shoaib Akmal Hashmi, Syed Mohsin Gilani, Syed Hassnain Gilani, Syed Hadi Gilani, Shan Sadruddin Gilani, Ali Asad Gilani, Muhammad Imran Gilani and Muhammad Ibrahim Gilani.

SSP Operations Islamabad Directs SDPOs to Strengthen Crime Prevention Measures

■ Qazi Ali Raza reviews law and order, security arrangements and police performance; calls for prompt public complaint redressal.

CRIME REPORTER

ISLAMABAD

SSP Operations Islamabad Reviews Crime Prevention and Security Measures, Directs Circle SDPOs to Ensure Effective PolicingAccording to the details, Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Operations Islamabad Qazi Ali Raza held an important meeting with Circle Sub-Divisional Police Officers (SDPOs) to review crime prevention measures, the overall law and order situation, security arrangements, and police operational duties across the city.During the meeting, various matters related to effective policing, action against criminal elements, improved coordination among police units, and



strengthening overall police performance were discussed in detail.SSP Operations Islamabad directed the officers to adopt an effective strategy for crime prevention and ensure indiscriminate action against criminal elements. He emphasized that public complaints must be addressed promptly and citizens must be treated with courtesy, respect, and professionalism.He further directed all officers to perform their duties with honesty, dedication, and professional competence. Security arrangements must remain effective, and no negligence or carelessness in the performance of official duties would be tolerated.SSP Operations Islamabad Qazi Ali Raza stressed that the protection of citizens' lives and property remains the foremost priority of Islamabad Police. He directed officers to utilize all available resources to prevent crime, maintain law and order, strengthen security, and ensure a safe environment for the residents of Islamabad.



Health Reporter Asif Mughal and Owais Nambardar met with the newly appointed Medical Superintendent (MS) of Lahore General Hospital, Professor Dr. Syed Jafar Hussain Shah, to congratulate him on assuming his new responsibilities and extend their best wishes for his success.

HSA, SPRF sign international agreement to expand educational, employment opportunities

CITY REPORTER

ISLAMABAD



The Health Services Academy (HSA) and Sehat-e-Pakistan Research Foundation (SPRF) have signed an international agreement with ICS AI University to expand educational and employment opportunities for Pakistani youth through internationally recognized programmes in emerging technologies.

The agreement was signed by Dr. Adil Naseer, Chief Executive Officer of SPRF, in collaboration with HSA, with a focus on equipping young people with modern digital, technological and healthcare-related skills.

Under the partnership, the organizations plan to introduce internationally recognized courses, short diploma programmes and degree programmes in Artificial Intelligence (AI), cybersecurity, digital health and other emerging technologies.

The proposed programmes will include NOCN-endorsed learning hours and globally benchmarked certifications aimed at providing international recognition and strengthening the professional capabilities of Pakistani youth.

IGP Islamabad Inspects Police Barracks, Orders Timely Completion of Construction Work

■ Captain (Retd.) Muhammad Sohail Chaudhry stresses quality standards, improved residential facilities and prompt resolution of police personnel's grievances.

STAFF REPORTER

Islamabad



IGP Islamabad Reviews Barracks Construction, Directs Timely CompletionAccording to the details, Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad, Captain (Retd.) Muhammad Sohail Chaudhry, visited Police Lines Headquarters and conducted a detailed inspection of the under-construction residential barracks. Director General NCCIA Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi and other senior police officers accompanied him during the visit.IGP Islamabad personally reviewed the ongoing construction and renovation work at the residential barracks designated for police officers and personnel. He directed the concerned officers to ensure that all construction work meets the prescribed quality standards and is completed within the stipulated timeframe. He stressed that unnecessary delays must be avoided and that continuous monitoring of both construction quality and progress must be ensured.IGP Islamabad stated that providing clean, comfortable, and quality residential facilities to police officers and personnel remains a priority. Better facilities play an important role in improving the welfare, morale, and professional performance of the force.Later, IGP Muhammad Sohail Chaudhry held an orderly room, where he personally listened to the applications and concerns of police officers who appeared before him regarding various service-related matters. He issued appropriate directions and instructed the concerned officers to resolve personnel's genuine grievances on merit and in accordance with established rules and regulations.

DG NCCIA Rizvi pushes digital reforms for faster complaint resolution

CRIME REPORTER

ISLAMABAD



Director General National Cyber Crime Investigation Agency (NCCIA) Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi has directed officials to ensure priority handling of public complaints, regularly review progress and maintain follow-up until every complaint is fully resolved.

According to NCCIA on Sunday, the DG Rizvi issued these directions while chairing a meeting with the Complaint Management Unit (CMU) team, software developers and staff officers to review measures aimed at improving the agency's complaint management system.

The meeting discussed the effective registration of citizens' complaints, monitoring of their progress, digitalisation of the complaint management system and measures for upgrading software to improve its performance.

DG NCCIA Rizvi pushes digital reforms for faster complaint resolution

Rizvi directed the officials concerned to ensure that complaints were handled on a priority basis and that progress on each case was reviewed regularly.

He emphasised that the relevant officers must maintain follow-up until complaints were completely addressed, ensuring that citizens received timely assistance.

The DG Rizvi also reviewed ongoing efforts to improve the complaint management system through digital solutions and software upgrades aimed at making the process more efficient.

Digital Healthcare Must Prioritise Patients Over Technology, Says HSA Vice Chancellor

■ Prof Dr Shehzad Ali Khan stresses patient-centred reforms at CardioCon 2026, highlights Pakistan's growing heart disease burden.

STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD



)Health Services Academy (HSA) Vice Chancellor Prof Dr Shehzad Ali Khan has called for a patient centred approach to digital healthcare, saying technology should improve access to medical services rather than create additional burdens for patients and healthcare professionals.Addressing the 5th Annual International Conference, CardioCon 2026, Prof Dr Shehzad said digital health reforms should be driven by clinical needs and patient welfare instead of the commercial interests of technology providers.Among those attending the conference were Gen Azhar Kayani, Prof Hafeezullah, Prof Shehryar, Prof Akhtar Bandaisha and Nisar Memon.Dr Shehzad said heart disease was responsible for about 47 deaths every hour in Pakistan, with annual fatalities estimated at around 450,000. He cautioned that the actual burden could be higher, as many deaths, particularly in rural areas, remain unreported.While acknowledging progress in medical technology and diagnostics, he said digital health involved much more than installing computers and hospital management software.The real value of digital health lies in the collection and effective use of reliable data for healthcare planning, disease prevention, diagnosis and treatmenthe said Referring to Pakistan's response to the Covid-19 pandemic, Dr Shehzad cited the National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC) as an example of data driven decision making, where information on testing, infections and deaths was compiled daily from across the country.He noted that the introduction of digital systems in some hospitals had increased administrative workloads and waiting times instead of improving access to care.Dr Shehzad said many digital health solutions were developed without adequate consultation with medical professionals and stressed that technology should be designed around clinical priorities rather than commercially available software.He also urged cardiologists to place greater emphasis on prevention, public awareness, early diagnosis, pre-hospital care and post-discharge follow-up.The conference brought together cardiologists and healthcare professionals from Pakistan and abroad to discuss advances in cardiovascular medicine, preventive cardiology, digital health and the future of healthcare delivery.

Echoes of Pakistan's shared past in Rawalpindi's neglected temples

■ Before the partition of British-ruled India in 1947, Rawalpindi was a religiously diverse city where non-Muslims made up the majority of the population

NEWS DESK

RAWALPINDI

Emerging through a tangle of electrical wires and advertising billboards in Rawalpindi's urban sprawl, the towering spire of a Hindu temple is a reminder of the city's mixed religious past.

The temple "tells us about a very different time of Rawalpindi's history when many different diverse communities used to coexist together", researcher Hassaan Tauseef told AFP.

Built in the 19th century, according to Tauseef, the facade of the temple in the city's main commercial Raja Bazaar area is crumbling. Over the honking of motorcycles jostling through the crowded streets, a jewellery maker plies his merchandise from its ground floor.

The disused shrine is one of Rawalpindi's 39 surviving Hindu temples, just three of which still serve the city's dwindling Hindu community, while the others have been converted into homes, shops and other premises, according to architectural and cultural heritage expert Tauseef.

Islamabad Expressway Service Road (East) Project Progresses Rapidly

■ CDA Speeds Up Construction to Ensure Timely Completion; Project Expected to Ease Traffic Congestion and Save Fuel.



CITY REPORTER

ISLAMABAD

In line with the directions of Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi and Chairman Capital Development Authority (CDA) and Chief Commissioner Islamabad Sohail Ashraf, development work on Islamabad Expressway Service Road (East) is progressing rapidly.According to details, overall, more than 41 percent of the project's development work has been completed so far. Under this project, approximately 8.5 kilometers of a dual carriageway three-lane road is being constructed from Faizabad to Gulberg.To complete the Islamabad Expressway Service Road (East) project within the given target, construction work is proceeding fast simultaneously on various sections. On the under construction road, excavation work along with sub-grade, sub-base and sub-base (top) is proceeding apace. All 153 piles and slab work of the underpass included in the project have also been completed. While work on Ramp A and Ramp B retaining walls is also proceeding apace.Furthermore, work on various culverts for bridges and drainage has entered the final stages. Besides, an enforcement operation against illegal constructions and encroachments around Service Road East is also continuing in order to remove all obstacles in the project.Chairman CDA Sohail Ashraf said that timely completion of the project's construction works with high quality must be ensured in all circumstances. He said that the completion of Service Road (East) will significantly reduce traffic pressure on the Islamabad Expressway. Similarly, the completion of this project will save citizens time and fuel.

Karachi mayor vows to prevent repeat of May 12 violence, Calls for dialogue

STAFF REPORTER

KARACHI

Karachi Mayor Barrister Murtaza Wahab on Sunday called for political dialogue to resolve differences, saying the city must never witness a repeat of the May 12 tragedy.

Speaking at the inauguration of road rehabilitation and sewerage projects in Orangi Town, he stressed that negotiations and mutual understanding were essential to resolving political disputes.

"We do not want another May 12. Political dialogue should continue, and we want no roads to be blocked," Wahab said, adding that political parties should be free to raise their concerns through peaceful discussions.

He said the country needed improved economic conditions and renewed hope for the younger generation, stressing that peace was essential for business and development.

Referring to opposition leader Ali Khurshidi, Wahab described him as a brother and an educated person, saying political differences should not prevent cooperation on public welfare projects.

The mayor was speaking at ceremonies marking the inauguration of sewerage system rehabilitation and installation of paving blocks on ZMC Family Park Road, as well as the improvement and rehabilitation of routes connecting Faqir Colony with Metroville Road through Mominabad and Usman Road.

Islamabad Police Bust Three Criminal Gangs, Arrest Six Suspects

■ Stolen motorcycles, mobile phones and illegal weapons worth millions recovered in separate operations across the capital.

Crime Reporter

ISLAMABAD





Islamabad Police Arrest Six Gang Members, Recover Stolen Motorcycles, Mobile Phones and Illegal WeaponsAccording to the details, Islamabad Police Nilore, Tarnol, and Karachi Company Police Stations teams arrested six accused belonging to three organized criminal groups during separate operations against land grabbing, motorcycle theft, and mobile phone snatching and theft.During the operations, police teams recovered five motorcycles, five mobile phones, two Kalashnikovs, one pistol, and ammunition from the possession of the arrested suspects. The recovered property is worth millions of rupees.SSP Operations Islamabad Qazi Ali Raza stated that the protection of citizens' lives, property, and assets remains the foremost priority of Islamabad Police. He emphasized that a zero-tolerance policy is being followed against land-grabbing elements and that indiscriminate action against those involved in illegal occupation of land will continue.He further stated that all available resources are being utilized to take effective action against criminal elements, protect citizens, and maintain law and order in the city. No one will be allowed to threaten the lives, property, or assets of citizens.Islamabad Police remains committed to protecting the public and eliminating crime, with operations against criminal elements continuing across the capital.

5,000 Visitors Attend Opening Day of Pak Water & Environment Expo 2026

■ Leading Companies Showcase Advanced Water Treatment, Recycling, Wastewater Management and Renewable Energy Technologies.

City Reporter

ISLAMABAD



The two-day 'Pak Water & Environment Expo 2026', comprising an exhibition and conference, was held, in which experts, manufacturers, suppliers and technology experts associated with the industry came together to present modern solutions for water treatment, wastewater management, recycling and renewable energy.Director General Water, Capital Development Authority (CDA), Sardar Khan Zimri inaugurated the event by cutting the ribbon and visited the stalls set up by leading water treatment companies.The aim of this expo is to promote modern technologies and sustainable solutions to address the challenges facing Pakistan's water and environmental sectors.National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST) is participating as Knowledge Partner in the conference held alongside the exhibition.Addressing the conference, Professor Dr. Imran Hashmi of the Institute of Environmental Sciences and Engineering (IESE), School of Civil and Environmental Engineering (SCEE), NUST, highlighted the importance of smart monitoring of water quality and assessment of risks to public health, and emphasized research, technology development and opportunities for industrial cooperation to improve water conservation.Associate Dean, NUST (IESE), Professor Dr. Muhammad Arshad shed light on the impacts of rapidly growing urbanization on water quality, particularly emerging contaminants and their implications for environmental sustainability.Head of Department of Environmental Sciences, NUST (IESE), Professor Dr. Muhammad Fahim Khokhar highlighted the growing challenges of smog, calling it the country's "fifth season" and stressed the need to address its environmental and public health impacts.Professor Dr. Sher Jamal Khan highlighted the usefulness of 'Moving Bed Biofilm Reactor' (MBBR) technology for wastewater treatment in limited space in Pakistan, while Professor Dr. Zeeshan discussed the role of Rapid On-Site Composting Machines in improving resource efficiency and promoting sustainable waste management.Certificates were also distributed among the participants of the conference.The exhibition showcased a wide range of technologies and products including modern water treatment and Reverse Osmosis (RO) systems, industrial pumps, valves, filtration equipment, sewage treatment solutions, recycling technologies and wastewater management systems.This expo also provides an excellent platform for visitors, industry stakeholders and business representatives to interact with manufacturers and suppliers, review emerging technologies, establish business linkages and explore opportunities for investment and cooperation.

Qatar, Germany call on Iran to end support for Houthis and increase nuclear transparency

■ Qatar and Germany have urged Iran to comply with its obligations under the NPT and Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement with IAEA.



Web DESK

RIYADH

This joint statement was issued on the occasion of the official visit of Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, to Germany on Nov 20 and 21.
Both countries also condemned Iran's attacks and threats against commercial vessels and expressed opposition to any action that would lead to the closure of the strait of Hormuz or impede freedom of navigation.Qatar and Germany stressed that Iran should neither develop nor acquire nuclear weapons, and both countries called for the elimination of the threats posed by the use of ballistic missiles in the region. Both countries also called on Iran to stop providing weapons and other support to Houthis in Yemen.
This stance comes at a time when Qatar is playing a key role as a mediator in efforts to end the war between Iran and the US, while negotiations are also underway regarding Iran's nuclear program and the reopening of the strait of Hormuz.



A meeting between Honorary Advisor to the Federal Minister for National Heritage and Culture Syed Usman Tahir and Ambassador of the Russian Federation to Pakistan Albert P. Khorev was held here on Sunday

Russian cargo ship ablaze in Baltic Sea after drone strike, crew evacuates

■ A Russian cargo ship bound for Kaliningrad caught fire after a suspected Ukrainian drone attack in the Gulf of Finland, prompting a Finnish investigation and crew evacuation.

Web Desk

MASCOW

A Russian cargo vessel bound for the country's Baltic exclave Kaliningrad has been hit by a drone attack in the eastern Gulf of Finland, Russian and Finnish authorities say.
The ship - the Sparta II - caught on fire after the strike on Saturday morning, before drifting into Finnish waters. Finnish defence forces said Ukraine was likely behind the attack. Kyiv has yet to comment.
"War is spilling over into our immediate vicinity," Finnish Prime Minister Petteri Orpo said. "Ukraine has the right to fight back against the aggressor."
Kaliningrad Governor Alexei Besprozvannykh said two drones had been used, based on preliminary information, and there was "no threat" to the territory's supplies.



The Sparta II was sanctioned by the US in 2022 and Ukraine earlier this year, and is run by a Russian company, according to the Ukrainian and US governments.
The company says on its website that it was established within the structure of Russia's defence ministry in 2011 and since 2015 has been operating within the military construction complex.
Finland's coast guard said it had been alerted to the attack at around 08:50 local time (06:50 GMT) on Saturday and that the cargo vessel had been located approximately 50km west of the island of Suursaari in the Gulf of Finland.
This prompted "temporary aviation and maritime restrictions" around the area, Finnish border officials said.Shortly after the incident, Finland's defence ministry said a Russian helicopter was suspected of violating the country's airspace, potentially linked to "rescue or tracking operations".
A Russian rescue vessel approached the ship and was told by the crew that they did not need to be evacuated, Kaliningrad's governor wrote on Telegram, adding: "The crew is currently carrying out the necessary work and plans to continue on its way."

Bahrain says Iranian attack hits industrial facility as air defences intercept attacks

■ Bahrain reported an Iranian strike hit a civilian industrial site, sparking a fire with no injuries, while Iran's Revolutionary Guards claimed missile-and-drone attacks on US bases.

Web Desk

RIYADH

Bahrain said that an Iranian attack had hit a civilian industrial facility, causing a fire but no injuries, while Iran's Revolutionary Guards said they launched a missile-and-drone attack on US military positions in the kingdom, home to the US Navy's Fifth Fleet.
The incidents were the latest escalation of regional hostilities since the US and Israel ?attacked Iran in February. Since then, Gulf Arab states have ?been drawn into the conflict, and there have been repeated Iranian attacks across the region.
Civil Defence teams were working to contain the fire at the industrial facility, the ministry said in a post on X. It gave no details on the location or nature of the site.



Bahrain's interior ministry initially issued an alert urging residents to move to the nearest safe location because of a potential threat, without providing details. It later issued an all- clear before sending a second alert.
Later, Bahrain's Defence Force said its air defences had intercepted a number of Iranian aerial attacks. Shrapnel from the interceptions caused material damage but no casualties, it said, adding that Tehran was continuing its "systematic hostile approach" towards the kingdom.

Saudi air defences intercept ballistic missile allegedly targeting Makkah

■ Saudi Arabia claims its air defenses intercepted a Houthi ballistic missile targeting Makkah and destroyed a drone reportedly heading towards Riyadh.

Web Desk

RIYADH

Saudi-led coalition forces have claimed that the Kingdom's air defence systems intercepted and destroyed a ballistic missile allegedly launched by Yemen's Houthi rebels towards the holy city of Makkah.
According to Brigadier General Turki Al-Maliki, spokesperson for the coalition forces, Saudi air defence systems responded swiftly, neutralising the missile before it could reach its intended target.
Amid the potential threat, emergency warning sirens were activated in Makkah, while the Civil Defence issued precautionary safety alerts. The alerts were subsequently lifted after the threat had been neutralised, and residents were informed that the situation was under control.



The coalition spokesperson also revealed that Saudi air defence systems had earlier intercepted and destroyed a drone allegedly launched by the Houthi militia towards the Saudi capital, Riyadh.
Saudi-led coalition says it intercepts two Houthi missiles fired towards Riyadh
Saudi authorities provided details of the two incidents, highlighting the swift response of the Kingdom's air defence systems in addressing the reported threats.
Meanwhile, Saudi Civil Defence urged the public to refrain from sharing unverified information or sensitive details concerning security incidents and defensive operations on social media.
Authorities also called on residents to follow official instructions and rely exclusively on information issued by relevant government agencies during emergencies.

NATO will defend every inch of Polish territory, Rutte says

Web Desk

WARSAW

NATO will defend every inch of Polish territory, NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte said in Warsaw, a day after Poland said Russia violated its airspace with three objects that were probably two missiles and a drone.
"I can guarantee that NATO will defend every inch of Polish territory,
The head of NATO forces in Europe, General Alexus Grynkewich, would do everything necessary to identify any threats to defense and deterrence capabilities and would implement appropriate adjustments if needed, Rutte said, according to PAP.



Drones have repeatedly strayed into the airspace of countries on NATO's eastern flank during Russia's war in Ukraine, fuelling tension with the Western military alliance and stoking fears that the conflict could spread.
Friday's intrusion came as Poland ?was hosting military exercises involving the "Coalition of the Willing" that groups allies of Ukraine, a coincidence Polish officials described as not accidental.

South Africa's first female deputy president and UN official dies



Web Desk

CAPE TOWN

South Africa's first female deputy president, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, who also served as UN under-secretary-general and executive director of UN Women, has died at the age of 71, Elected as a member of parliament in 1994 in South Africa's first democratic government, former teacher Mlambo-Ngcuka served as deputy president of South Africa from 2005 to 2008 Before becoming deputy president, a role in which she oversaw government initiatives to reduce poverty with a focus on women, Mlambo-Ngcuka served as the minister of minerals and energy and as a deputy minister in the Department of Trade and Industry. In August 2013 she took the oath of office as executive director of UN Women, serving two terms at an organization created to lead the UN's work on advancing gender equality and women's empowerment.

Israeli strike kills three in vehicle distributing aid in Gaza, witnesses say

■ The vehicle appeared to be carrying packaged foodstuffs, and papers inside carried the logo of World Central Kitchen

Web Desk

GAZA

An Israeli strike killed three Palestinians in a vehicle carrying papers and food for the World Central Kitchen charity in Gaza City according to Gaza's health ministry and eyewitnesses.
The Israeli military said several militant operatives were targeted in the area without providing further details. It did not immediately respond to questions on why it had hit a vehicle that appeared to be distributing aid.
World Central Kitchen did not immediately respond to a request for comment.
The vehicle appeared to be carrying ?packaged foodstuffs, and papers inside carried the logo of World Central Kitchen, an aid organisation that distributes food in Gaza,



according to a Reuters witness.
"It was just about to stop to distribute the food and drink to children when it was hit by a missile," said Abu Zein Al-Daya, who also witnessed the strike.
Afterwards, meals of cooked rice were scattered around the vehicle, which was partially covered in the blood of the victims of the attack.
The Israeli military previously killed seven World Central Kitchen workers in a 2024 strike, including citizens of Australia, Britain and Poland.
At the time, the military said there had been "serious errors and ?breaches of procedure" but in 2026 it said it had found no basis upon which to open criminal investigations into the incident.Israel briefly launched a ground operation in Gaza earlier this week and killed six in a strike on a hospital that it said was targeting a Hamas commander.
An October 2025 US-backed ceasefire halted major fighting in the shattered territory but has not ?stopped Israeli attacks on Gaza or secured Hamas' disarmament.
At least 1,600 Palestinians and 5 Israeli soldiers have been killed in the time since, according to respective Palestinian and Israeli tallies.
Israeli troops now control around two-thirds of Gaza, up from more ?than half at the time of the ceasefire, with Hamas controlling a sliver of territory along Gaza's coast.
Israel's more than two-year-long assault on Gaza has killed tens of thousands, caused a hunger crisis, internally displaced Gaza's entire population and led to assessments of genocide from scholars and a United Nations inquiry.

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Govt expenses squeeze development

The ever-expanding administrative machinery of Pakistan is putting additional pressure on public finances at a time when the country needs to generate millions of jobs, attract private investment and accelerate development spending.

With more than 80% of provincial expenditure consumed by recurrent costs, weak local government financing and persistent delays in public-private partnership projects, questions are emerging over whether existing governance structures are delivering value for the resources allocated to them.



Nearly 3.5 million people enter Pakistan's labour force every year, while unemployment among graduates aged 20-24 has reached 32.8%, rising to 42.3% among women, according to a research report published by the Institute of Cost & Management Accountants of Pakistan (ICMA) International.

It argues that administrative arrangements need to be aligned with changing economic realities, particularly the country's growing employment requirements and limited fiscal capacity.

The report, titled ICMA's Fiscal Vision for Pakistan: Aligning Administrative Structures with Economic Realities, highlights the disconnect between the size of the workforce entering the economy and the government's ability to facilitate productive employment through investment, entrepreneurship and regional economic development.

The pressure is particularly visible in public finances, where provincial governments spend more than four-fifths of their budgets on recurrent expenditures, leaving limited fiscal space for development initiatives. At the same time, local governments accounted for less than 5% of total government expenditure in 2024, highlighting the limited financial authority available to institutions closest to citizens and businesses.

The report suggests that expanding administrative establishments without clearly defining responsibilities and financing arrangements could further increase government expenditure without necessarily improving public service delivery.

"Pakistan cannot continue adding administrative layers and expect them to automatically produce economic development," said Ali Arif, an industrialist. The real issue is that businesses face multiple government departments, overlapping regulations and lengthy approval processes, while the cost of maintaining the administrative structure continues to rise.

"Now we are in a debate of creating new provinces, without even realising that businesses are already tired of inter-provincial trade and business issues, after the 18th Amendment. More provinces mean more stakeholders, more consultations, and of course more administrative machinery, which may create more mess than betterment," Arif added.

The problem extends beyond the size of government establishments to the effectiveness of institutions responsible for facilitating investment. The federal government's public-private partnership pipeline, for instance, contains 47 projects, including 22 qualified and 25 non-qualified projects. However, only one has reached the concession agreement stage, indicating significant weaknesses in moving projects from planning to implementation.

The slow progress raises questions about the government's capacity to prepare commercially viable projects, undertake technical and financial assessments and coordinate between federal and provincial institutions. Private investment cannot be mobilised simply by announcing infrastructure pipelines if projects remain stuck in administrative and procedural stages.

The employment situation adds another dimension to the challenge. Federal recruitment in 2024 attracted 274,566 applications for just 1,722 positions, reflecting intense competition for limited public-sector employment. While government jobs remain attractive to graduates seeking financial security, the scale of applications also highlights the pressure on an economy that has struggled to generate sufficient productive employment outside the public sector.

"The government has become an increasingly expensive administrator but has not developed the institutional capacity required to act as an effective facilitator of economic activity," said a former official of the State Bank of Pakistan. "Investors do not need more offices and departments; they need predictable policies, faster approvals and officials who can resolve problems rather than pass files between institutions," he added.

PMIF26 Puts Pakistan on the Global Minerals Investment Map



Dr. Muhammad Tayyab Khan

From exploration announcements and international agreements to emphasis on local processing, infrastructure, and skills development, the global forum set out an agenda to turn mineral wealth into long-term economic value.

The Pakistan Minerals Investment Forum 2026 (PMIF26) concluded in Islamabad with a clear message from the government and international industry leaders: Pakistan's mineral potential must now translate into commercially viable projects, stronger partnerships and lasting economic benefits. Over two days, the global forum brought together government leaders, investors, mining companies, technical experts and international institutions to discuss the policies, investment environment and infrastructure needed to develop the country's minerals sector.

Held on November 12–13 in Islamabad, PMIF26 was organised by the Government of Pakistan, endorsed by the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC), with Oil and Gas Development Company Limited (OGDC) as its founding partner. The forum brought together more than 10,000 visitors from over 60 countries. During the two-day event, 13 agreements and memorandums of understanding were signed between Pakistani and international companies. The forum featured strategic and technical conferences alongside an international exhibition. The international exhibition provided a platform for Pakistani and international companies to showcase their expertise, technologies and services, while the strategic and technical conferences addressed investment, exploration, infrastructure and sustainable mining.

PMIF26 underscored the need for Pakistan to move beyond exporting raw minerals and focus on value-added exports, including processed and refined minerals, finished and semi-finished products, supported by stronger domestic processing, refining and manufacturing capabilities. Addressing the forum, Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif invited international investors to explore the country's mineral wealth and assured them of government support and investment protection. "Your safety is our safety," the prime minister declared. He called for facilities that could convert raw materials into finished and semi-finished products, creating employment, technical expertise and opportunities for technology transfer.

Addressing the participants of the forum, Chief of Army Staff and Chief of Defence Forces Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir said Pakistan aims to become a competitive destination for long-term mineral investment. He said all possible measures are being taken to ensure the security of the entire mining ecosystem. He said mines and miners, investments, industries, projects and all associated people would be provided adequate protection.

Field Marshal Munir said harnessing Pakistan's mineral wealth is a collective national objective. He emphasised that the country's goal is not merely to export raw materials but to develop the entire value chain, including refining and manufacturing. He said Pakistan seeks to foster long-term partnerships that create sustainable economic value for the country and its partners. He emphasised that Pakistan must move from potential to productivity, from promises to action, and from raw exports to value-added growth.

A major announcement during the forum came from the Frontier Works Organisation (FWO), which reported an estimated 350 million tonnes of copper in the Dasht-i-Kain area of Balochistan's Chagai district, based on an analysis of approximately half of its drilling data. Mari Minerals announced a significant gold and copper discovery in Chagai, while National Resources Limited (NRL) reported copper and gold mineralisation across at least eight porphyry discoveries in Chagai. NRL also announced a $100 million investment commitment in Pakistan's mineral sector and invited domestic and international investors and service providers to explore emerging opportunities.

Federal Minister for Energy (Petroleum Division) Ali Pervaiz Malik outlined the government's efforts to strengthen geological mapping, modernise exploration and improve access to reliable data. He highlighted copper and gold prospects in Chagai and western Balochistan, lithium, tin and tungsten in Gilgit-Baltistan, and antimony and base metals in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The National Minerals Data Centre and the Geological Survey of Pakistan (GSP) GeoPortal were also launched to improve access to geological information.

Discussions at the forum also covered power and water supplies, transport networks, environmental and social standards, and the need for predictable policies and transparent regulations. International participation brought global industry perspectives to these discussions. A government dialogue on investor-ready mining jurisdictions highlighted policy reforms, regional cooperation, local content, skills development and long-term industrial growth.

PMIF26 also placed emphasis on technical knowledge and national capacity. Its technical conference featured research and discussions on geological assessment, mineral exploration, artificial intelligence, processing technologies and sustainable mining. The international exhibition provided a platform to companies and technology providers to present their capabilities and establish business connections.

In his closing remarks, President PMIF and MD/CEO OGDC Ahmed Hayat Lak highlighted a national minerals capability development programme launched by OGDC in collaboration with Wood Mackenzie to strengthen

New Law for Theatre in Punjab: Cultural Reform or a Restriction on Artistic Freedom?

By: Mudassar Iqbal



The Punjab Assembly's approval of the Punjab Dramatic and Theatrical Performances Bill 2026 has sparked a fresh debate about the future of theatre and performing arts in the province. While the government describes the legislation as an important step towards improving the quality of stage performances, discouraging inappropriate content and promoting family-friendly entertainment, it has also raised serious questions among artists, theatre organisers and cultural critics. The bill, presented by Provincial Minister for Information and Culture Azma Bokhari, was passed by the Punjab Assembly on November 18, 2026, through a majority vote. Opposition members raised objections to several provisions, expressing concerns that mandatory registration, advance licensing requirements and government scrutiny of scripts could undermine creative freedom in theatre. Amendments proposed by the opposition were also rejected.

The new legislation seeks to replace the century-old Dramatic Performances Act of 1876 with a modern regulatory framework governing dramatic and theatrical activities across Punjab. Under the proposed system, organisers will be required to obtain a formal licence from the Department of Information and Culture before staging theatrical performances at public venues. They will also have to submit complete scripts to the relevant Script Review Committee. Approval from the Executive Director of the Punjab Council of the Arts will be necessary before a performance can proceed.

The legislation does not limit its regulatory scope to theatrical content alone. It also brings individuals associated with theatre productions under its framework. Actors, directors, technical staff, makeup artists and other relevant professionals will be required to register. This means that individuals who are not registered may not be permitted to participate in theatrical productions.The government maintains that these measures will help prevent inappropriate material in stage dramas, improve professional standards and ensure better oversight of theatrical activities. According to the government's position, theatre should serve as a cultural platform where families can enjoy entertainment together, including with their children.

However, the legislation comes at a time when Pakistan's theatre and performing arts industry is already struggling with several challenges, including limited financial resources, inadequate infrastructure, a shrinking audience base and uncertain employment opportunities. In this environment, additional licensing requirements, mandatory registration and government scrutiny could increase production costs and create further administrative difficulties for theatre organisers and independent artists.The central question is whether the new law will genuinely improve the quality of theatre in Punjab or make it increasingly difficult for independent performers and smaller theatre groups to continue their creative work.

There is no doubt that maintaining ethical and professional standards in theatre is important. However, the success of any regulatory framework will depend on its ability to strike a balance between oversight and reform on the one hand, and artistic freedom. freedom of expression and the economic interests of performers on the other.Punjab's new legislation is not merely about regulating theatrical performances. It raises a much broader question about how much creative freedom the state is willing to allow while seeking to regulate cultural activities.

The practical implementation of the law in the coming months will determine whether it gives Punjab's theatre industry a new lease of life or creates additional obstacles for an already struggling sector.



Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal arrived in Beijing on Sunday to attend the departure ceremony of Pakistan's first astronaut, marking a historic milestone in the country's journey into space and a new chapter in Pakistan-China friendship.

ECC approves amendments to export financing policy for SMEs

■ **ECC, chaired by Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb, approved changes to the export financing policy for SMEs, cutting the minimum export requirement from 80 to 50 per cent**

Special Correspondent

ISLAMABAD



The Economic Coordination Committee (ECC), chaired by Finance Minister Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, approved amendments to the export financing policy to promote exports by small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

According to a Finance Ministry statement, under the Long-Term Export Growth Financing facility, the minimum export requirement has been reduced from 80 percent to 50 percent. Under the new policy, the firms concerned must export at least 50 percent over four years, with progress reviewed every six months.

The meeting also approved a technical supplementary grant for National Economic Initiatives projects, including a Rs100 million technical supplementary grant for the Minorities Welfare Fund. The statement said the fund will provide financial assistance, scholarships, wedding expenses for orphan girls and emergency relief to minority communities. It will also be used to repair places of worship.

The ECC approved Rs26.5 million to buy spare parts for Punjab Rangers' helicopters, and a Rs67 million grant to repair and maintain helicopters used by the Frontier Corps Balochistan (North).It also approved Rs100 million for the salaries of employees of the Social Media Protection and Regulatory Authority and the Social Media Complaint Council.

From the Rs2 billion already released for the Daanish Schools Authority, the ECC allowed Rs500 million to be spent on operational expenses for FY2026-27.



Power tariff likely to rise by Rs2.88 per unit

Business Reporter

ISLAMABAD

Consumers across the country may face an increase in electricity prices by Rs2.88 per unit under the fuel price adjustment for the month of October as the Central Power Purchasing Agency (CPPA) has submitted a request to the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA),

The application stated that a total of 10.35 billion units of electricity were sold to power distribution companies (DISCOs) during October.NEPRA officials said a hearing of the proposed increase would be held on November 26, during which the regulator would examine the figures and arguments presented by the CPPA.

According to sources, if the request is approved, electricity consumers will face an additional financial burden of approximately Rs29.8 billion.

However, the final decision on the proposed tariff adjustment will be announced by NEPRA after reviewing the application and hearing the relevant arguments.

China Condemns US Move to Restrict Telecom Giants' Access to American Phone Numbers

■ **Beijing Calls FCC Decision 'Malicious', Accuses Washington of Unfairly Targeting Chinese Telecommunications Companies.**

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD



Beijing's commerce ministry denounced on Sunday a recent move by Washington to cut direct access for Chinese telecom giants to US phone numbers, calling the decision "malicious".

The order, approved in a vote by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), aims to curb access to US phone numbers by "bad actors" it said were responsible for "illegal robocalling campaigns".

Affected entities include China's three biggest telecom firms, the state-owned China Unicom, China Telecom and China Mobile.

"Without any factual basis, (the FCC) has violated the principles of non-discrimination and fair competition to wantonly smear and maliciously suppress Chinese telecommunications firms," Beijing's commerce ministry said in an online statement.

Recent moves by the FCC aimed at "decoupling" ties in the telecoms sector "run counter to the important consensus reached by the two heads of state", it said.

They "undermine the stability of China-US economic and trade relations", it said, urging Washington to "revoke" the steps and warning China may take its own "necessary measures".

The criticism by Beijing comes after President Xi Jinping hosted his US counterpart Donald Trump at a regional summit this week in Shenzhen, where the Chinese leader hailed "stable and improved" ties with Washington.

The FCC order said that a "proliferation of call-originating entities" both within the United States and abroad has presented "new challenges" in its efforts to secure the country's voice networks from illegal robocalls.

The regulator has previously blacklisted telecom equipment made by Chinese tech giant Huawei and several other Chinese firms over national security concerns.

In October, the FCC decided to ban Chinese labs from testing electronics bound for the United States from December 2028, warning that such practices open a "critical gateway" into American communications networks.

United Business Group secures major victory In Lahore

■ **The Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry, along with various trade associations has announced its support for UBG in the upcoming elections.**

Business Reporter

KARACHI



The United Business Group (UBG) has secured a major victory in Lahore ahead of the upcoming Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) elections,

The Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry, along with various trade associations has announced its support for UBG in the upcoming elections.

Of the 70 voters from Lahore, 60 have announced their support to the group led by SM Tanveer, further strengthening its position in the election.

Former federal minister Dr Gohar Ejaz has formally participated in the Federation Chamber elections for the first time, marking a significant development in the group's election campaign.

UBG had earlier secured a victory in the Lahore Chamber elections by defeating Mian Anjum Nisar.

Ali Hussam Asghar, chairman of UBG Lahore, was subsequently elected president of the Lahore Chamber.

With the backing of 60 Lahore-based voters, UBG have significant support ahead of the FPCCI elections.

Pakistan's public debt surges by Rs6.2 trillion in one year

■ **Pakistan's public debt increased by Rs6.2 trillion in one year, reaching Rs90.98 trillion, while the debt-to-GDP ratio declined to 72pc.**

Staff Reporter

KARACHI



Pakistan's total public debt recorded a substantial increase of Rs6.2 trillion over the past year, reaching Rs90.98 trillion by the end of June 2026, according to figures released by the Ministry of Finance.

According to a report by a private television channel, the country's total public debt stood at Rs84.8 trillion at the end of June 2025. Over the following 12 months, the figure rose to Rs90.98 trillion, representing an increase of Rs6,200 billion.

The Ministry of Finance has also provided details of the debt figures in its Debt Sustainability Analysis (DSA), prepared for fiscal years 2027 to 2029.



KSE-100 gains 491 points to close at 176,053 in mixed trading week

■ **KSE-100 index gains 491 points to close at 176,053 during a mixed trading week, while market capitalisation declines by Rs75 billion.**

Commerce Reporter

KARACHI

The Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed a mixed trading trend during the outgoing business week, with the benchmark KSE-100 Index gaining 491 points to settle at 176,053.

According to the weekly market update, the benchmark index fluctuated within a range of 3,639 points during the week, reflecting mixed activity in the stock market.

The KSE-100 Index recorded a weekly high of 179,692 points, while its lowest level stood at 176,053 points.

Trading activity remained significant during the week, with a total of 4.266 billion shares changing hands in transactions worth Rs122.46 billion.

Meanwhile, the market capitalisation of the Pakistan Stock Exchange declined by Rs75 billion during the week, falling to Rs19,260 billion.

The weekly performance reflected a mixed trend in the equity market, as the benchmark index recorded an overall gain while the market's total capitalisation registered a decline.

CDWP approves seven development projects worth Rs19.3 billion

■ The CDWP approved seven development projects worth Rs19.3 billion and referred four projects costing Rs172.4 billion to ECNEC for final approval.

News Desk

ISLAMABAD

The Central Development Working Party (CDWP) has approved seven development projects worth Rs19.3 billion and recommended four projects costing Rs172.4 billion for final approval by the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (ECNEC).

The decisions were taken at a CDWP meeting chaired by Federal Minister for Planning Ahsan Iqbal, which reviewed 11 development projects with a combined estimated cost of Rs191.8 billion.

Among the major proposals referred to ECNEC was Punjab's Rs104.4 billion agricultural transformation project, aimed at increasing farmers' incomes and promoting efficient water use in the agriculture sector.

The forum also granted in-principle approval to the third revised Prime Minister's Youth Skill Development Programme, worth Rs47.6 billion, and referred it to ECNEC for final approval. Ahsan Iqbal directed officials to rationalise its cost and avoid duplication of work.

Two road infrastructure projects in Balochistan were also recommended for ECNEC approval. These include the construction and expansion of the Sibi-Talli and Kohlu-Rakhni roads, costing Rs11.1 billion, and a Rs9.3 billion project to construct a blacktop road from Sui to Kashmore.



The CDWP approved a Rs4.4 billion project to expand cellular services in Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan.

It also approved a Rs600 million initiative targeting education, employment and empowerment opportunities for young people in 16 districts of Sindh. The project aims to provide skills training and employment opportunities to 15,000 young people, with women expected to account for approximately 50% of beneficiaries.

The meeting also approved the establishment of border terminals at Taftan and Gabd along the Pakistan-Iran border. The Taftan terminal is estimated to cost more than Rs4.8 billion, while the Gabd terminal will require over Rs4.34 billion.

The terminals are expected to help regulate cross-border trade, curb smuggling and generate employment opportunities.

Additionally, the CDWP approved a Rs1.4 billion Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission project for the exploration of radioactive minerals in the Marwat Range.

A revised project for the construction of the Mirwaiz Maulvi Muhammad Farooq Shaheed Medical College in Muzaffarabad, costing more than Rs3.41 billion, was also approved.

The forum further approved a project to strengthen administrative institutions responsible for managing refugees in Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan.

Pakistan outclass USA 5-1 in Azlan Shah Hockey tournament match

● This was Pakistan's second consecutive victory in the six-nation event that strengthened the Green-shirts' position at the top of the points table.

SPORTS REPORTER

ISLAMABAD



Pakistan outplayed the United States 5-1 in their league match of the Sultan Azlan Shah Hockey Cup in Ipoh, Malaysia, This was Pakistan's second consecutive victory in the six-nation event that strengthened the Green-shirts' position at the top of the points table.

Pakistan dominated the match from the beginning, maintaining pressure on the US defence and creating scoring opportunities. The Green-shirts took the lead in the 18th minute when Rana Waheed Ashraf found the net.Pakistan doubled the lead through Sufyan Khan, who scored in the 21st minute. The US responded in the 31st minute through Chirasika Sekai, who scored to reduce the deficit to 2-1.

However, Pakistan quickly regained control with Mohammad Imad scoring in the 32nd minute to extend the lead to 3-1. Maintaining their aggressive stance, Pakistan added another goal through Abu Bakr Mahmood in the 46th minute. In the 58th minute, Hannan Shahid netted the fifth goal to ensure a massive victory for Pakistan.



Saim Ayub seeks break from cricket to regain mental strength

SPORTS DESK

Islamabad

Saim Ayub is reportedly losing interest in cricket and has personally requested the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) to allow him to take a break from the game for some time.According to sources, the batter intends to return to cricket only after becoming mentally stronger.According to details, Saim Ayub is currently going through the worst phase of his career. Due to his poor performances, he has already been dropped from the national squad. He has also avoided playing domestic matches, while his name is missing from the central contract list.

Sources revealed that Saim has personally informed the PCB that he is currently not in a position to play cricket. He intends to make his comeback through the One-Day Departmental Cricket Tournament. He wants to work on his mental strength before returning to the game.

Hazlewood says was never close with Khawaja but has no issues with book

■ "Nothing really sat badly with me... If that's how he wants to portray things and tell his story, then go for it, says Australian pacer



SPORTS Desk

Australia

Australian fast bowler Josh Hazlewood said he and Usman Khawaja were never particularly close, but that he bore no resentment towards his former teammate over an autobiography which has reignited debate around the 2018 ball-tampering scandal.

Khawaja alleged in his book that knowledge of the plan to use sandpaper on the ball during the tour of South Africa extended beyond the three players who were sanctioned over the scandal.

Hazlewood has said he had no knowledge of the plot and the 35-year-old suggested his limited interaction with Khawaja outside the team environment may explain why he was unaware of any such discussions.

"In any work environment, whether it be sport or in the office, and you have a team of 20, there's two or three who you just don't get along with in terms of hanging out," Hazlewood said in an interview in News Corp newspapers.

"You get on with each other to a professional point of view... and I didn't hate them or avoid them at all costs, but I didn't go out of my way to hang out with them.

"It wasn't the closest team. It's been thrown around now about bowlers versus batters, but at that point in time, it might have been true to a degree."

Hazlewood said he had no issue with either the publication or timing of Khawaja's book 'Sabr'.

"Nothing really sat badly with me... If that's how he wants to portray things and tell his story, then go for it," he added.

Cricket Australia attempted to draw a line under the revived scandal on Wednesday by announcing an independent forum for all the players to give their accounts of what happened in 2018 without fear of sanction.

Cummins wins Cricket Australia's 'unanimous support' to remain Test captain

● Cricket Australia backs Pat Cummins as Test captain despite 'Sandpapergate claims, rejecting any suggestion his integrity was compromised ahead of the New Zealand series.

SPORTS DESK

SYDNEY

Cricket Australia threw its "unanimous support" behind Pat Cummins to remain Test captain , rejecting any suggestion his integrity had been compromised by the lingering "Sandpapergate" scandal.

Cummins has been under huge pressure since Usman Khawaja claimed the whole team knew about the plot to alter the ball in a Test at Cape Town in 2018.

He strenuously denied being aware of what was going on in a press conference last week, but his position was undermined when Cameron Bancroft backed Khawaja's version of events.

Only then-captain Steve Smith, his deputy David Warner and Bancroft -- who used the sandpaper -- were found to be responsible by a Cricket Australia probe.

With speculation over Cummins' future rampant and a home four-Test series against New Zealand next month, CA moved to stamp out any further discussion about the 33-year-old's fate after meeting him to check on his welfare.



It came after Josh Hazlewood earlier Saturday suggested he could quit if any action was taken against his long-time bowling partner.

CA expressed "its unanimous support for Pat Cummins as captain" following a board meeting.

"We are absolutely determined to steward Australian cricket through this very difficult time with diligence and patience and to listen and learn," said chairman David Boon.

"We've expressed our support to Pat and our concern for everyone impacted by the events of the 2018 tour of South Africa.

"We have learned from that experience and are proud of the team and the culture Pat and other leaders in the team have fostered over the past eight years and unequivocally reject any implication that Pat's integrity has been compromised."

Verstappen wins 'crazy, surreal' Las Vegas race

■ Max Verstappen won a chaotic Las Vegas Grand Prix for the third time in four years, beating Lando Norris, while George Russell finished ninth after crashing late in the race.

SPORTS DESK

ISLAMABAD



Red Bull's Max Verstappen won a crazy, slipstreaming Las Vegas Grand Prix for the third time in four years , while Mercedes rival George Russell hit the barriers late on and finished ninth.

In a race of 35 lead changes over 50 laps, and drivers nose-to-tail under the floodlights in a non-stop battle with track advantage swinging back and forth like a yo-yo, McLaren's 2025 champion Lando Norris and teammate Oscar Piastri finished second and third behind the polesitter.

Ferrari drivers Lewis Hamilton and Charles Leclerc collided again , with both collecting 10-second penalties for separate incidents and finishing seventh and 10th respectively.

Team boss Fred Vasseur left "more than upset" and called it ?unacceptable.

"That was crazy. Really, really surreal and something I've never seen before in Formula One myself," said Verstappen, who beat Norris by 0.639 seconds and did not try to hide his satisfaction at Russell's misfortune.

"It was a crazy amount of fighting and the slipstream was so big that it was just impossible to drive off and it was just crazy how many people were just following."

Mercedes have already won both titles, with 20-year-old Italian Kimi Antonelli becoming the youngest ever Formula One world champion this month, while Verstappen and Russell started the weekend scrapping to end the season as overall runner-up and clashing on track in practice and verbally afterwards.

Verstappen's fourth win in six races sent him 37 points clear of Ferrari's Hamilton, with Russell, who started on the front row, dropping to fourth overall and now level with Norris.

Antonelli was fourth with Alpine's Pierre Gasly fifth and teammate Franco Colapinto sixth. Carlos Sainz was eighth for Williams, from 20th on the grid in the Spaniard's 250th race. "I think that must have been the most chaotic race ever ?in the history of Formula One," said Norris, whose team had both cars disqualified last year after a race he had started on pole.

"I didn't know what was happening half ?the time. I didn't know if I was going to have the best race and have a chance to win or end up last. It had everything this race."

Piastri, who started 17th, could ?only agree.

Mohammad Rizwan snubbed as PCB announces central contracts for 38 men's cricketers

Babar Azam and Salman Ali Agha offered contracts covering both Test and ODI formats

SPORTS REPORTER

LAHORE

Pakistan wicketkeeper-batter Mohammad Rizwan and Shan Masood have been left out of the Pakistan Cricket Board's (PCB) latest central contracts list, which features 38 men's cricketers across different categories.

Pakistan Head Coach Mike Hesson and PCB Director High Performance Aqib Javed announced the contracts, which will conclude on June 30, 2027, during a joint press conference in Lahore.

Speaking at the press conference, Javed said the cricket board was awarding central contracts to players who were already active in at least one of the three formats.

He said the category-based contract structure was designed to allow players to remain focused on their respective formats.

However, he clarified that being placed in a particular format category did not prevent a player from representing Pakistan in other formats.

Commenting on Rizwan's future, Javed said the former captain could still be selected for the national team if required, emphasising that central contracts were not linked to selection.



The new structure includes separate categories for players representing Pakistan in Tests, One-Day Internationals (ODIs) and Twenty20 Internationals (T20Is), alongside a development category.

Babar Azam and Salman Ali Agha have been offered contracts covering both Test and ODI formats.

The Test category includes Azan Awais, Mohammad Abbas, Sajid Khan and Saud Shakeel.

Meanwhile, Abrar Ahmed, Arafat Minhas, Fakhar Zaman, Faheem Ashraf, Haris Rauf and Shaheen Shah Afridi have been offered contracts covering both ODI and T20I formats.

The T20I category features Hasan Nawaz, Maaz Sadaqat, Mohammad Salman Mirza, Naseem Shah, Sahibzada Farhan, Shadab Khan and Usman Tariq.The PCB has also included 19 cricketers in the development category.

The players in this category are Abdul Samad, Abdullah Fazal, Ahmed Daniyal, Ali Raza, Farhan Yousaf, Hunain Shah, Mohammad Taha, Mohammad Tayyab Arif, Muhammad Ghazi Ghori.

Daily The Spokesman

Monday
November 23,2026



Istanbul, Türkiye, November 22, 2026: Federal Minister for Law and Justice and Human Rights Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar meets H.E. Mahinur Özdemir Göktaş, Minister of Family and Social Services of the Republic of Türkiye, on the sidelines of the Women and Justice Summit.

Lahore again tops global pollution ranking with AQI above 500

■ Punjab Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb says IQAir does not display updated data in real time

Staff Reporter

LAHORE



Lahore has once again topped the list of the world's most polluted major cities, recording a particulate matter reading of 538 between 9am and 10am on Sunday, according to the figures from the Swiss air quality monitoring platform IQAir.

The Swiss air quality platform categorises readings above 300 as "hazardous", indicating extremely polluted air that poses serious health risks to residents.

India's Delhi ranked second among the world's major cities, with a particulate matter reading of 207.

Bahawalpur in Pakistan's Punjab reported a high reading of 463, while Sargodha recorded 382.

Multan registered a particulate matter reading of 255, according to IQAir.

The toxic haze has left Punjab's capital city shrouded for days, reducing visibility and causing widespread health complaints, including throat irritation, breathing difficulties and itchy eyes.

Over recent years, Pakistan and India have each accused the other of worsening the air. Earlier this month, Punjab Senior Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb linked the worsening smog across the province to large-scale fireworks during Diwali celebrations in India.

Portuguese Foreign Minister Paulo Rangel arrives in Pakistan for two-day visit

● Portuguese Foreign Minister Paulo Rangel has arrived in Pakistan with a business delegation to hold talks with Ishaq Dar and attend the Pakistan-Portugal Business Forum.

SPECIAL REPORTER

ISLAMABAD



Portuguese Minister of State and Foreign Affairs Paulo Rangel arrived in Pakistan on Sunday for a two-day official visit from November 22 to 23, aimed at reviewing bilateral relations and exploring opportunities to expand trade and investment between the two countries.

According to the Foreign Office (FO), Rangel is visiting Pakistan at the invitation of Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar. Additional Secretary for Europe Ambassador Ayesha Ali received the Portuguese foreign minister upon his arrival.

During the visit, Rangel will hold delegation-level talks with DPM Ishaq Dar and meet other members of the Pakistani leadership to discuss bilateral relations and avenues for strengthening cooperation.

The Foreign Office said the Portuguese minister is accompanied by a business delegation to participate in the inaugural Pakistan-Portugal Business Forum. The forum will provide companies from both countries an opportunity to hold business-to-business meetings and explore commercial partnerships and investment opportunities.

The discussions will cover several key sectors, including agri-food, renewable energy, pharmaceuticals, information technology and textiles.

According to the Foreign Office spokesperson, the two sides will review the full spectrum of bilateral relations and discuss ways to further strengthen economic and commercial ties.

The visit comes as Pakistan and Portugal mark the 77th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations, which were formally established on November 7, 1949.

The Foreign Office expressed hope that Rangel's visit would provide an opportunity to build on the longstanding relations between the two countries and broaden bilateral cooperation across various sectors.

Political dialogue solution to AKJ problems: ex-PM Sardar Tanveer

■ Urges political leadership and members of civil society to play their role in addressing public grievances through peaceful and political means.

STAFF REPORTER

KARACHI



Former Prime Minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir Sardar Tanveer Ilyas has called for political dialogue to resolve the prevailing situation in Azad Kashmir, stressing that taking up arms or confronting state institutions is unacceptable under any circumstances.

Speaking to journalists in Rawalakot, Ilyas said addressing the difficulties faced by residents of Rawalakot and Poonch was an urgent priority. He emphasised that the hardships and concerns of the people could not be ignored.

He maintained that armed struggle against the state and its institutions was not an acceptable way to resolve disputes, urging political leadership and members of civil society to play their role in addressing public grievances through peaceful and political means.

Three militants killed in joint CTD-Army operation in Peshawar

■ Three suspected militants were killed in a joint CTD-Army operation in Peshawar, while a search operation continues for fleeing accomplices.

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD



Three militants belonging to the proscribed group Fitna al-Khawarij were killed during a joint operation by the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) and Pakistan Army in Peshawar's Matani area, officials said on Sunday.

According to a spokesperson for the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa CTD, intelligence sources had reported the presence of militants affiliated with Fitna al-Khawarij along Pasani Road near Adizi Khor in Matani. The suspects were allegedly planning attacks on government installations and activities aimed at undermining Pakistan's security and sovereignty.

Acting on the intelligence, teams from the CTD's SWAT unit, accompanied by Pakistan Army personnel, reached the location and took positions to apprehend the suspects.

However, the militants opened heavy fire upon spotting the security forces, prompting personnel to retaliate in self-defence and engage the suspects.Two terrorists killed in CTD operation in Peshawar Following the exchange of fire, a search of the area led to the recovery of three bodies. The deceased were identified as Abdul Rashid, Saeedullah and Saeed Nawab.

Other suspected militants managed to escape under the cover of darkness and dense bushes, the spokesperson said.

Security personnel recovered two Kalashnikov rifles, a pistol, three hand grenades, five magazines and national identity cards from the possession of the deceased.

A search operation is underway in the area to track down and arrest the fleeing suspects.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Inspector General of Police Zulfiqar Hameed and Additional Inspector General of Police, CTD, reaffirmed their commitment to preventing militants from carrying out their activities and bringing those involved in terrorism to justice.

220 couples tie the knot under Punjab Dhi Rani Programme

■ Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz presented each couple with a greeting card worth Rs200,000.

STAFF REPORTER

SHEIKHUPURA



A mass wedding ceremony of 220 couples was held under Punjab Dhi Rani here on Saturday.

Punjab Minister Sohail Shaukat Butt attended the event as a special guest. The ceremony saw the mass marriages of 200 Muslim and 20 minority couples.

Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz presented each couple with a greeting card worth Rs200,000.

Minister Sohail Shaukat Butt said that parents are fulfilling their daughters' religious duty, and Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz is standing with them like a loving mother.

He said that the target of marrying 13,000 couples will be completed by March.

Rana Ahmed Atiq Anwar said that the Punjab Dhi Rani Programme is a historic and revolutionary initiative of Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz.

At the end of the mass wedding ceremony, a luncheon was held in honour of the newlyweds and guests, and a special prayer was also offered.

Azam Nazir Tarar leads Pakistan delegation at Istanbul Women's summit

■ A Pakistani delegation led by Law Minister Azam Nazeer Tarar attended Istanbul's World Women's Summit, discussing women's empowerment, equality and bilateral cooperation.

NEWS DESK

ISTANBUL

A Pakistani delegation led by Federal Minister for Law, Justice and Human Rights Azam Nazeer Tarar participated in the 7th World Women's Summit in Istanbul, Turkiye, where discussions focused on protecting the rights of women and girls, promoting their empowerment, ensuring equal opportunities and strengthening Pakistan-Turkiye cooperation.The summit was hosted by Turkiye's Minister of Family and Social Services, Mahinur Ozdemir Goktas, and attended by delegations from several countries. Sarah Ahmed, Convener for Gender Mainstreaming, also accompanied the Pakistani delegation.

Addressing the summit, Azam Nazeer Tarar reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to women's empowerment, equal rights, education and economic independence.

He said Pakistan was committed to ensuring equal rights, dignity and opportunities for women, adding that their meaningful participation in political, economic, social and professional spheres remained a key national priority.

The minister emphasized the importance of providing women with greater access to education and employment, promoting economic independence and ensuring effective representation in decision-making processes.

He also highlighted the role of the Protection and Welfare Bureau in safeguarding girls, supporting their education and rehabilitation, and promoting their empowerment.

Tarar said protecting women's rights, strengthening social protection mechanisms and enhancing women's capabilities were important components of the government's policy framework.

He further observed that Islam grants women dignity, equality and fundamental rights, stressing that safeguarding women's rights was a collective responsibility of society.

KP governor urges political leaders to end bitterness, resolve differences through dialogue

■ Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Faisal Karim Kundi has urged political leaders to avoid abusive language, exercise restraint and resolve differences through dialogue.

STAFF REPORTER

PESHAWAR



Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Faisal Karim Kundi on Sunday expressed concern over growing political bitterness, urging political leaders to exercise restraint and resolve their differences through dialogue rather than personal attacks.

Speaking to the media in Peshawar, Kundi said he would criticise Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman whenever he disagreed with him, but stressed that political differences should not lead to abusive language.

"Even when Maulana Fazlur Rehman is wrong, we will call him wrong. However, politics can be conducted without resorting to verbal abuse," he said.

The governor said political leaders should demonstrate maturity, wisdom and tolerance, adding that negotiations were essential to resolving disputes and reducing tensions. Responding to statements by federal ministers, Kundi said political differences should not become so bitter that leaders ere unable to sit together and discuss issues. He said his political upbringing did not allow him to use abusive language against anyone and rejected suggestions that he had verbally attacked Fazlur Rehman.

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