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Maryam Nawaz announces new law to ensure strict punishment for child exploitation

STAFF REPORTER

LAHORE

Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has announced plans to introduce new legislation to ensure stringent punishment for individuals involved in the exploitation of children and women. She also said that special fast-track courts are being established to strengthen their protection.

In a message marking the World Day for the Prevention of and Healing from Child Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Violence, Maryam Nawaz said that safeguarding children's rights was essential to building a safe and civilized society. She stressed that effective measures were necessary to protect children's safety, dignity and future.



'Sindh has become a paradise?' Khawaja Asif takes swipe at Bilawal

STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD

Defence Minister Khawaja Asif on Wednesday launched a sharp attack on Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari over his criticism of the federal government and calls for a political reset, questioning the PPP's governance record in Sindh and its role in the ruling coalition.

In a strongly worded post on X, Asif sarcastically remarked that Sindh had become a "paradise" under the PPP's 18-year rule and that Karachi's condition had become an example admired by the rest of the world.

The defence minister questioned Bilawal's moral standing to lecture others on governance and accountability while his party continued to govern Sindh and remained a partner in the federal government.



Parliament will decide on referendum for new provinces: Rana Sanaullah

STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD

Prime Minister's Adviser on Political Affairs Rana Sanaullah has said that any decision regarding the creation or reduction of provinces in Pakistan, whether their number increases to 32 or remains at 12, will be made through political consensus.

Speaking on Dunya News programme Dunya Meher Bokhari Kay Sath, Rana Sanaullah said parliament was fully empowered to decide on the matter, rejecting Bilawal Bhutto Zardari's assertion that parliament lacked such authority.

He clarified that discussions on creating new provinces had not yet taken place in the federal cabinet or parliament and were currently being held at seminars. Once the matter is formally brought before parliament, all political parties will have the opportunity to participate in the debate.The adviser added that any decision to hold a referendum on the issue would also rest with parliament. If parliament decided in favour of a referendum, the exercise could be conducted accordingly. Commenting on Bilawal Bhutto Zardari's recent press conference, Sanaullah described his remarks as contradictory and said there was no need for such a strong response.



Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif unveils the plaque of inauguration of Rathoa-Haryam Bridge in Muzaffarabad .

Nawaz pledges renewed development drive in AJK under 100-day plan

- Nawaz said the PML-N leadership and the AJK government were working together with unprecedented commitment to implement the 100-day development programme.

STAFF REPORTER

MUZAFFARABAD

Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) President Nawaz Sharif has pledged to accelerate development in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) under a 100-day programme, with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif agreeing to allocate resources for public welfare and infrastructure projects.

Addressing a high-level meeting in Muzaffarabad on Wednesday, Nawaz said the federal and Punjab governments were committed to improving healthcare, education, roads and other essential services across AJK.

The meeting was attended by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, AJK President Muhammad Najeeb Naqi Khan, AJK Prime Minister Syed Iftikhar Ali Gillani, Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz and senior federal and provincial ministers. Nawaz said the PML-N leadership and the AJK government were working together with unprecedented commitment to implement the 100-day development programme.

He appreciated the contributions of Amir Muqam, Rana Sanaullah, Chaudhry Tariq and Khawaja Saad Rafique towards the region's development.

He also commended Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz for providing green buses for Muzaffarabad and Mirpur, clinics on wheels and laptops for students. Nawaz criticised previous AJK governments, accusing them of neglecting public welfare and failing to fulfil their promises. He said AJK had a painful history and its people deserved better governance and development.

(Continued on Page-5)

Economic growth expected to improve this year, says SBP governer

OUR CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD

State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) Governor Jameel Ahmad said that Pakistan must increase its exports, domestic savings and investment to break free from recurring economic boom-and-bust cycles and achieve sustainable growth,

Addressing an economic event, Jameel Ahmad said Pakistan's economic indicators were improving following a period of stability, but structural reforms were essential to avoid repeated cycles of economic boom and slowdown. He said Pakistan recorded real economic growth of 3.7 per cent in fiscal year 2026, with further improvement expected in the current fiscal year.



Fazl to address Peshawar High Court Bar on November 21

OUR CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD

Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI) chief Maulana Fazl-ur-Rehman will address members of the Peshawar High Court Bar Association on Saturday, November 21, after accepting an invitation from the lawyers' body.JUI spokesperson Aslam Ghouri said the party chief had accepted the invitation and would also address other bar associations across the country.

Bilawal poses as democracy champion but delivers nothing, says Talal Chaudhry

- Talal said the PPP had formed governments more than any other political party and must answer for public issues after ruling Sindh for 17 years

STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD

Minister of State for Interior Talal Chaudhry has criticised Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari, accusing him of portraying himself as a champion of the Constitution and democracy while delivering no practical results.

Addressing a press conference in Islamabad on Wednesday, Talal said the Constitution could not be interpreted according to personal convenience, adding that political leaders considered it acceptable when it suited them but unconstitutional when it did not.

Responding to Bilawal's speech a day earlier, the minister said the PPP chairman spoke as if he were an opposition leader, despite his party



governing three provinces and Gilgit-Baltistan. He pointed out that the president and Senate chairman also belonged to the PPP, adding that the party held power in nearly 70 per cent of the country.

Talal said the PPP had formed governments more than any other political party and must answer for public issues after ruling Sindh for 17 years. Turning to the £190 million corruption case, he alleged that PTI founder Imran Khan and other accused were involved in one of the biggest corruption cases in Pakistan's history.

Sindh division could trigger uncontrollable violence, Bilawal warns govt

PPP chairman Challenges govt ministers to hear 'truth', warns against political confrontation | Questions constitutional basis of holding a referendum on new provinces

STAFF REPORTER

KARACHI

Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has warned that any attempt to divide Sindh could trigger violence beyond his control, declaring a referendum on the creation of new provinces unconstitutional.

Bilawal reiterated his opposition to the proposed division of Sindh and warned the government against pursuing measures that could aggravate political tensions.

He said no PPP worker would take up arms, but the situation could deteriorate to the point where violence spiralled beyond his control.Bilawal said the government's responsibility was to defuse tensions rather than create new



crises through controversial proposals.

He questioned the constitutional basis of holding a referendum on new provinces, saying it would be inappropriate to set aside the Constitution to conduct such an exercise.

The PPP chairman also questioned how the government could consider a referendum or fresh elections without first introducing electoral reforms.

He said public confidence in the electoral process must be restored before any such exercise could be considered.

Pakistan Army successfully tests Fatah-3 supersonic cruise missile

- Pakistan Army successfully launches the Fatah-3 supersonic cruise missile, strengthening the strike capabilities of its Rocket Force Command.

STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD

Pakistan Army has successfully conducted the launch of the Fatah-3 Supersonic Cruise Missile, marking another significant milestone in the country's efforts to strengthen its national defence capabilities, the military's media wing announced on Wednesday.

The missile is equipped with advanced navigation and propulsion systems, enabling it to engage targets at long ranges with high precision and lethality while travelling at supersonic speed.The successful launch is expected to significantly enhance the operational flexibility and strike reach of the Pakistan Army's Rocket Force Command, further strengthening the country's conventional deterrence and overall defence posture.



The launch was witnessed by the Commander of Army Rocket Force Command, senior officers of the Pakistan Armed Forces, as well as scientists and engineers involved in the development of the weapon system.

Following the successful launch, the President and Prime Minister of Pakistan, the Chief of Army Staff and Chief of Defence Forces, and the Services Chiefs congratulated the team and commended the achievement.They also appreciated the dedication and commitment of all personnel, scientists and engineers who contributed to the development of the missile system, describing the launch as another important step in advancing Pakistan's national defence capabilities.

DG NCCIA, NCHR Chairperson Discuss Joint Measures to Combat Cybercrime

■ Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi stresses institutional coordination to protect digital rights, prevent online harassment and ensure timely justice for victims.

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD

Director General of the National Cyber Crime Investigation Agency (NCCIA), Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi, held an important meeting with the Chairperson of the National Commission for Human Rights (NCHR) to discuss the protection of human rights, prevention of cybercrime and safeguarding citizens against online harassment and digital exploitation.According to an NCCIA spokesperson, the meeting focused on various issues concerning the protection of citizens' rights on digital platforms, effective measures to prevent cybercrime and ensuring



timely justice for victims of online harassment and digital abuse.Both sides also discussed strengthening institutional cooperation, coordination and information-sharing between the two organisations to improve the response to cybercrime-related complaints.The meeting emphasised the need for joint efforts and effective strategies to protect human rights and provide necessary support to victims of cybercrime, particularly those affected by online harassment and digital exploitation.Speaking on the occasion, DG NCCIA Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi reaffirmed the agency's commitment to working closely with all relevant institutions to safeguard citizens' digital rights, prevent online harassment and ensure effective redressal of complaints.He stressed that enhanced inter-institutional cooperation was essential to protecting citizens in the rapidly evolving digital environment.

Paigham-e-Pakistan Peace Conference in Faisalabad Calls for Muslim Unity, Protection of Two Holy Mosques

■ Maulana Abdul Khabir Azad says Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Türkiye's mutual defence cooperation guarantees security of the Two Holy Mosques; religious scholars, officials and community leaders express solidarity with armed forces

STAFF REPORTER

Faisalabad

A Paigham-e-Pakistan Peace Conference was organized at Gymkhana Club Faisalabad under the theme of Protection of the Two Holy Mosques, Religious Harmony, Respect for Humanity, the Role of the Pulpit and Religious Seminaries, and the Promotion of Paigham-e-Pakistan. The objective of the conference was to highlight Pakistan's role in establishing global peace, celebrate the success of Marka-e-Haq, discuss the mutual defence agreement between Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and Türkiye for the protection of the Two Holy Mosques, and promote the message of Paigham-e-Pakistan. Other key objectives included strengthening national unity and religious harmony in Pakistan, eliminating Fitna al-Khawarij and Fitna al-Hindustan, taking Pakistan's great national



narrative, Paigham-e-Pakistan, to every household, and highlighting the role of the pulpit, religious seminaries, and youth in society. The conference also paid tribute to the outstanding global peace services and efforts of Prime Minister of Pakistan Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and the great military leader of the Muslim Ummah, Field Marshal General Hafiz Syed Asim Munir. The conference was presided over by Chairman of the Central Ruet-e-Hilal Committee Pakistan, Grand Imam and Khateeb of Badshahi Mosque Lahore, and Ambassador of Peace, Maulana Syed Muhammad Abdul Khabir Azad. On this occasion, Commissioner Faisalabad Dr. Imran Hamid Sheikh, RPO Faisalabad Inam-ur-Rehman Malik, and all Deputy Commissioners and District Police Officers (DPOs) were also present. Prominent religious scholars, spiritual leaders representing all schools of thought, and social personalities participated in and addressed the conference. These included Mufti Fateh Muhammad Rashdi, Pir Syed Saadat Ali Shah, Allama Mukhtar Ahmad Nadeem, Allama Shabbir Anjum, Maulana Zahid Mahmood Qasmi, Mufti Zia Madani, Allama Riaz Kharl, Mufti Abdul Mueed Asad Ludhianvi, Maulana Yousaf Anwar, Allama Yaseen Zafar, Mian Muhammad Ajmal Abbas, Haji Ghulam Hussain Muhammadi Madani, Maulana Bilal Bilali, Sahibzada Syed Muhammad Abdul Baseer Azad, and other members of the Peace Committee. Addressing the conference, Ambassador of Peace Maulana Syed Muhammad Abdul Khabir Azad said that Almighty Allah commands Muslims to hold firmly to the rope of Allah and not to become divided into factions. He emphasized that unity among the Muslim Ummah is an urgent need of the time and that Saudi Arabia carries the responsibility of leadership of the Muslim world. He stated that the Makkah Defence Agreement for the protection of the Two Holy Mosques is a guarantee of unity and security for the entire Muslim Ummah.

BISE Rawalpindi Takes Strict Action Against Two Female Students for Using Unfair Means



CITY REPORTER

Rawalpindi

Chairman of the Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (BISE) Rawalpindi, Professor Dr Iqbal Mahmood, has reiterated that no compromise will be made on merit, transparency and fairness in the examination system.He said ensuring a peaceful, transparent and fair examination environment was the board's primary responsibility, adding that effective monitoring, improved administrative oversight and strict implementation of examination rules were being ensured to provide equal opportunities to all candidates.In this regard, Controller of Examinations Mubashir Saeed visited several examination centres during the Intermediate Second Annual Examinations 2026 to review examination arrangements, administrative matters and compliance with the prescribed code of conduct.During his visit to the examination centre at Government Viqar-un-Nisa Graduate College for Women, Rawalpindi, two female students were caught red-handed while using unfair means.Unfair Means Cases (UMCs) were registered against both candidates and forwarded to the board's Discipline Branch for further proceedings.The Controller of Examinations directed the examination staff to ensure strict compliance with examination rules and regulations, emphasising that action would be taken without discrimination against anyone found violating the prescribed procedures.He maintained that no leniency would be shown in cases of examination malpractice, stressing that discipline, merit and transparency would be upheld at all costs to protect the credibility of the examination system and the future of students.

ITP, Transport Union Agree on Strict Measures to Curb Smog, Enforce Vehicle Fitness Rules

STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD

ITP and Transport Union Agree on Strict Measures to Curb Smog, Enforce Vehicle Fitness and Traffic RegulationsAccording to the details, Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Islamabad Kainat Azhar Khan held an important meeting with representatives of the Transport Union to discuss measures for controlling smog, ensuring vehicle fitness, preventing overloading and enforcing traffic regulations.During the meeting, it was decided that all vehicles must obtain valid fitness certificates, while transporters would take practical measures to make their vehicles smog-free by November 30 and submit an undertaking in this regard. Strict legal action will be taken after the deadline against smoke-emitting vehicles and those operating without valid fitness



certificates.The meeting also focused on eliminating overloading. Vehicles carrying sand, gravel, cement and other construction materials were directed to cover their loads completely with strong tarpaulins to prevent materials from falling onto roads and dust from spreading. It was also agreed that overloaded vehicles would not be allowed to enter Islamabad and violations would result in strict legal action.

University of Chitral Hosts Two-Day Youth Expo to Promote Innovation, Entrepreneurship

■ DC Ehsan Ullah, DPO Khalid Khan jointly inaugurate event; youth empowerment, AI, climate change, startups and sustainable development remain key focus

News Reporter

CHITRAL

Formally commenced at the University of Chitral, bringing together young people, development organizations, academic stakeholders, and business representatives on a common platform to promote youth empowerment, innovation, entrepreneurship, and sustainable community development.

Organized under the leadership and vision of the Vice ChancellorProf. Dr. Hazir Ulla, the expo was jointly inaugurated by Deputy Commissioner Lower Chitral, Ehsan Ullah, and District Police Officer (DPO) Lower Chitral, Khalid Khan, alongside university officials, marking the commencement of the two-day event. The initiative aims to provide youth with opportunities for learning, innovation, engagement, and practical exposure to emerging challenges and opportunities.

The event is being organized in collaboration with Helping Hand for Relief and Development, Youth



Empowerment Club of the University of Chitral, Muslim Aid Pakistan, SIF, and the Chitral Chamber of Commerce, reflecting a collective commitment to youth development and strengthening partnerships between academia, civil society, and the business community.

The two-day expo focuses on key areas of contemporary relevance, including climate change and environmental sustainability, innovation and technology, artificial intelligence (AI) integration, social impact and community engagement, career counselling, business entrepreneurship and startups, and Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) interventions for sustainable community development.The expo also emphasizes inclusive development, promoting opportunities beyond gender and ethnic boundaries and encouraging young people to contribute to a more resilient, equitable, and sustainable society.The Vice Chancellor has reinforced that the campus has always been more than a place for academic learning; it is a launchpad for bold ideas, showcasing skills, creativity, and leadership qualities. The Chitral Youth is designed to bridge the gap between classroom knowledge and real-world impact, giving our students and youth from the region a platform to showcase their startups, research, and artistic talents while connecting directly with industry representatives, employers and community. Youth are not just the leaders of tomorrow-they are the innovators and changemakers of right now. This expo, no doubt, fosters a culture of creativity, entrepreneurship, responsible innovation, and community service, empowering youth to transform ideas into meaningful solutions and play an active role in the development of Chitral and beyond.

Punjab bans jeans for male and female teachers in new school dress code

CITY REPORTER

LAHORE

The Punjab School Education Department has introduced a new dress code for teachers working in government schools across the province, prohibiting both male and female teachers from wearing jeans.

Under the revised guidelines, teachers will also be barred from wearing shorts and using sunglasses inside school buildings.

The department has directed male teachers to wear waistcoats or formal trousers with shirts while making closed shoes mandatory. However, wearing sandals with socks has been allowed.

For female teachers, the new dress code prohibits high-heeled footwear, sleeveless outfits and see-through clothing.

Female teachers have been instructed to wear a dupatta or scarf with formal attire. However, wearing hijabs and abayas will remain permitted under the new guidelines.

The School Education Department has directed the heads of all government schools across Punjab to ensure immediate implementation of the revised dress code.



SP Pari Gul Tareen's Exemplary Service Record, Promoted to the Rank of SSP

Crime Reporter

ISLAMABAD

Having started her police career from Balochistan as ASP Quetta Cantt, Pari Gul Tareen demonstrated exceptional professional capabilities while fulfilling various key responsibilities. Later, she served in the Islamabad Police across several prominent positions, including SP Soan Division, SP Security and Administrative Affairs, Chief Traffic Officer (CTO), and SP Headquarters. In the presence of Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi and IG Islamabad, she has been promoted from the rank of SP to SSP. The journey of a female police officer from field operations to key administrative roles and her promotion to a senior rank is truly commendable. Best wishes!

IHC judge warns of contempt proceedings against CDA over failure to submit replies

COURT REPORTER

ISLAMABAD

: Justice Islamabad High Court (IHC) Inaam Ameen Minhas on Wednesday expressed displeasure over the Capital Development Authority (CDA) for failing to submit comments in five consecutive cases and warned of contempt proceedings against the responsible officials.During the hearing, the judge asked whether any CDA representative was present and questioned a CDA director about his length of service. The director replied that he had been working for the authority for 20 years. Expressing annoyance, the judge questioned what the official had been doing during his long service and why citizens were being subjected to unnecessary difficulties.

IGP Islamabad Directs Timely, Merit-Based Resolution of Police Personnel's Grievances

■ Captain (Retd.) Muhammad Sohail Chaudhry holds Orderly Room, directs officers to ensure transparency and avoid unnecessary delays in departmental matters

STAFF REPORTER

Islamabad



IGP Islamabad Holds Orderly Room, Directs Timely and Merit-Based Resolution of Police Officers' and Officials' GrievancesAccording to the details, Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Captain (Retd.) Muhammad Sohail Chaudhry held an Orderly Room at the Central Police Office (CPO), where police officers and officials presented their official and personal concerns. The IGP Islamabad listened to their issues in detail and directed the concerned officers to take timely action in accordance with the prescribed rules and regulations to ensure their resolution.On the occasion, the IGP Islamabad said that addressing the legitimate concerns of police officers and officials in a timely manner is an important part of departmental affairs. He directed that applications and departmental matters must not be delayed unnecessarily and that all cases should be handled strictly on merit, with transparency and in accordance with established rules and regulations.He emphasized that police officers and officials perform their duties round the clock to protect the lives and property of citizens; therefore, their welfare and legitimate concerns would receive special attention. He also directed senior officers to listen attentively to the issues of their subordinates and facilitate their resolution.IGP Islamabad further stated that serving and retired police officers could meet him directly regarding their personal concerns and departmental matters. He reaffirmed that direct access for police officers and officials would continue to ensure the timely, transparent and merit-based resolution of their issues. .

SP PM House Khan Muhammad Hasbani Awards Appreciation Certificates to Police Personnel

CITY REPORTER

ISLAMABAD



SP PM House Khan Muhammad Hasbani Commends Police Officers Deployed at PM House and PM Office with Appreciation CertificatesAccording to the details, Superintendent of Police (SP) PM House Khan Muhammad Hasbani awarded appreciation certificates to police officers deployed at the PM House and PM Office in recognition of their dedicated and professional performance of duties.On the occasion, he appreciated the officers' professionalism, alertness and commitment, and encouraged them to continue performing their duties with the same dedication, enthusiasm and diligence.He said that recognizing officers who demonstrate a strong sense of responsibility, discipline and professionalism helps boost morale and further improve the overall performance of the force. Islamabad Police values the dedication and services of its officers and officials.

HEC Successfully Conducts 35th Law Admission Test Across Pakistan

■ Over 35,523 candidates appear at 103 examination centres in 28 cities; 42,547 candidates registered for nationwide test

STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD



The Higher Education Commission (HEC), through its Education Testing Council (ETC), successfully conducted the 35th Law Admission Test (LAT) on November 15, 2026, reaffirming its commitment to ensuring standardized, transparent, and merit-based admission testing across Pakistan.Developed in accordance with the prescribed curriculum, learning outcomes, and essential competencies required for admission to LLB programmes at universities and degree-awarding institutions (DAIs), the LAT was designed to assess candidates' academic readiness for legal education. The test was developed through a calibrated item bank, ensuring consistency, reliability, and uniform assessment standards nationwide.An impressive 42,547 candidates registered for the examination, while more than 35,523 candidates appeared across 28 cities and 103 examination centres throughout the country, reflecting the nationwide reach and growing significance of the LAT in facilitating access to legal education.To uphold the highest standards of examination integrity, transparency, and operational excellence, ETC deployed 153 monitoring officers, supported by more than 2,500 trained invigilation personnel through a robust, three-tier monitoring and supervision mechanism. Comprehensive training sessions were conducted for examination staff ahead of the test, emphasizing impartiality, vigilance, professional conduct, examination security, and strict compliance with prescribed procedures.The examination was conducted in a disciplined, secure, and well-coordinated environment under the direct oversight of the CEO, ETC, and senior HEC management. The extensive monitoring arrangements and coordinated operational framework reflected HEC's institutional commitment to safeguarding examination integrity and ensuring equal opportunities for all candidates.

IG NHMP Reviews Performance of All Zones, Directs Special Measures for Fog Safety

■ Sultan Ahmed Chaudhry chairs monthly regional conference; orders awareness campaign for motorcyclists, drivers' eye screening and strict action against overloaded vehicles

STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD

IG NHMP Chairs Monthly Regional Conference, Reviews Performance Of All Zones A Monthly Regional Conference Was Held Under The Chairmanship Of Inspector General, National Highways & Motorway Police (nhmp), Sultan Ahmed Chaudhry, In Which Additional Inspectors General, Deputy Inspectors General And Senior Superintendents Of Police From All Zones Across The Country Participated Through Video Link. During The Meeting, The Overall Performance Of All zones was reviewed in detail. Discussions were also held on further improving traffic management, enhancing road safety, preventing road traffic accidents, providing safe and comfortable travel facilities to commuters, and other important operational matters. Addressing the conference, IG Motorway Police Sultan Ahmed Chaudhry directed the effective implementation of special safety measures to ensure safe travel for commuters on national highways and motorways in view of the foggy weather conditions. The IG Motorway Police further directed that officers deployed at all toll plazas should educate road users about precautionary measures to be adopted during fog. He also instructed that continuous coordination be maintained with the Pakistan Meteorological Department to obtain the latest weather updates and ensure timely dissemination of information.

Electricity tariff likely to rise by Rs2.88 per unit under October fuel adjustment

■ Electricity prices may increase by Rs2.88 per unit under October's fuel adjustment, potentially placing an additional Rs29.8 billion burden on consumers.



STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD

Electricity consumers across Pakistan may face an increase of Rs2.88 per unit under the monthly fuel price adjustment for October, as the Central Power Purchasing Agency (CPPA) has submitted a request to the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA).

According to the application, the CPPA has sought an increase in electricity tariffs under the monthly fuel cost adjustment mechanism.

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 on 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.

Cold nights ahead as fog and smog forecast across Punjab



STAFF REPORTER

LAHORE

Temperatures are expected to drop further during nighttime across most parts of the country, while several cities in Punjab are likely to experience fog and smog over the next 24 hours, according to the Pakistan Meteorological Department.

The weather is expected to remain dry in most parts of Islamabad, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab, Sindh and Balochistan, while cold conditions are likely to persist in hilly areas.

The Met Office has forecast fog and smog during nighttime in Lahore, Sialkot, Narowal, Sheikhupura, Okara, Kasur and Faisalabad.

Similar conditions are also expected at isolated places in Jhang, Khanewal, Multan and Bahawalpur.

Meanwhile, Murree, the Galiyat region, Gilgit-Baltistan and Kashmir are likely to experience cold and dry weather.Strong winds are also expected in northern districts of Balochistan, the department said.

Leh recorded the lowest temperature in the country at minus 8 degrees Celsius on Wednesday.

NCCIA Organises Public Awareness Session to Promote Cybercrime Prevention

■ Citizens briefed on online fraud, cyber harassment, account security and safe use of digital platforms

STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD



The National Cyber Crime Investigation Agency (NCCIA), Islamabad Circle, organised a public awareness session to educate citizens about cybercrime prevention and promote safe digital practices.The session was conducted by Deputy Director Asif Nawaz and Assistant Director Tanveer Hussain Awan, who highlighted various cyber threats and stressed the importance of responsible and secure use of digital platforms.During the session, participants were briefed on online fraud, cyber harassment, unsafe social media practices, fraudulent online activities, account security and the protection of personal information.The participants were also advised to use strong passwords, avoid suspicious links, safeguard their personal data and exercise caution while using digital platforms to minimise the risk of cybercrime.In addition, guidance was provided on the procedure for lodging complaints in cases of cybercrime, along with an overview of the role and responsibilities of the NCCIA in addressing such offences.NCCIA Director General Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi emphasised that public awareness was equally important alongside effective enforcement measures in combating cybercrime. He said the agency was further expanding its public awareness initiatives to protect citizens from digital threats and promote a safer online environment.

National Police Academy Project 96pc Complete, Says CDA Chairman

■ State-of-the-art 11-storey building being constructed in Sector H-11 with 126 rooms, jogging track, rappelling towers and obstacle courses

STAFF REPORTER

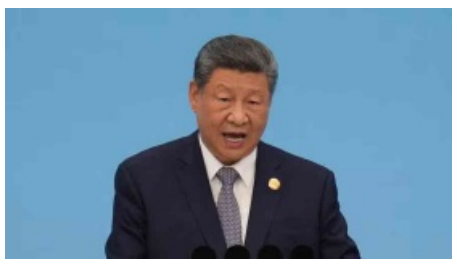
ISLAMABAD



: Chairman Capital Development Authority (CDA) and Chief Commissioner Islamabad Sohail Ashraf visited the under construction National Police Academy project in Sector H-11, Islamabad and conducted a detailed inspection of the construction work.Relevant senior officers, while briefing Chairman CDA on the progress made so far in the National Police Academy project, said that the Police Academy Building comprises 11 floors, including the basement and ground floor and for the first time in CDA's history, this state-of-the-art 11 storey building is being constructed specifically for the training of police personnel.During the briefing, it was said, in line with the directions of Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi and Chairman CDA Sohail Ashraf, the state-of-the-art National Police Academy project has been completed in a record period of just 15 months. During the briefing, it was said that the 11 storey building includes the construction of 126 rooms as well as a jogging track, rappelling towers and obstacles for the trainee officers.While briefing Chairman CDA, it was said that overall, more than 96 percent of the development work of the National Police Academy project has been completed and the finishing work of the under construction National Police Academy building has entered its final stages.On the direction of Chairman CDA and Chief Commissioner Islamabad, work is being carried out 24/7 to complete the remaining finishing work of the building. During the briefing, it was apprised that the construction of a 7.442-meter long track and landscaping work in the Police Academy are continuing at a fast pace, while on the same track, rock cutting, track earthwork, stone pitching and curbstone work have been completed.During the briefing, it was said that the civil work of two rappelling towers included in the National Police Academy project is near completion. Furthermore, the installation work of various obstacles for better physical training of trainee officers included in the project is ongoing. During the briefing, it was further said that on the instructions of the Chairman CDA, 24/7 construction work is continuing at a fast pace to complete the remaining construction work of the National Police Academy Project.Chairman CDA Sohail Ashraf, while directing to ensure the provision of all high-quality training facilities at the National Police Academy, said that the completion of the Police Academy building and other works will provide high quality professional training facilities to trainee police officers in the Federal Capital Islamabad.

China's Xi calls for free and open trade at APEC summit

■ Xi Jinping urged support for free trade and opposed protectionism at an Asia-Pacific summit in China, ahead of high-stakes talks with Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin on trade and global conflicts.



Web DESK

SHENZHEN

Chinese President Xi Jinping on Wednesday urged support for "free and open trade," while expressing opposition to "protectionism" in an opening speech at an Asia-Pacific ?summit where he was due to meet his US and Russian counterparts. Xi's remarks came after Washington announced further restrictions on China's access to advanced AI chips from companies such as Nvidia (NVDA.O), opens new tab, which could further complicate a fragile trade truce with Beijing. China has pledged to retaliate.

“We must firmly uphold the rules-based multilateral trading system with the World Trade Organization at its core, support free and open trade and investment, maintain the stability and smooth operation of global industrial and supply chains," Xi told an audience of business executives, after posing a series of rhetorical questions on how the Asia Pacific should respond to a changing world.



MANILA: Federal Minister for Law & Justice and Human Rights, Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar, in a group photo with global delegates and ministers on the occasion of the 2nd Global Ministerial Conference on Ending Violence Against Children in Manila, Philippines.

Kuwait reports drone attacks as Iran, US trade attacks on Qeshm and Bahrain

■ He said the situation was under control and relief agencies were on full alert.

Web Desk

Kuwait

Kuwait’s army has said the Gulf country is under attack by drones while the United States and Iran traded blows, marking escalating tensions in the region as a peace deal remains elusive.

The US earlier carried out several attacks on Iran’s southern island of Qeshm, in the Strait of Hormuz, hours after Iran said it launched a drone attack on a US radar system in Bahrain.

“The American attack on locations on Qeshm island caused no damage to residential, commercial, or infrastructural areas,” Ahmad Nafisi, deputy governor of Iran’s southern Hormozgan province, said.



He said the situation was under control and relief agencies were on full alert.

IRNA reported five to six explosions on the island on Tuesday evening.

A US official told Al Jazeera the strike hit a missile launch site on Qeshm, in response to Iran’s earlier attack on a US base in Bahrain. US Central Command said Iranian drones aimed at a US radar system at an air base in Bahrain “were intercepted without any damage to US equipment or personnel”.

Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps said it carried out a “precision operation” with drones on the US-operated radar at the Sheikh Isa air base, in response to “repeated violations of Iranian airspace by US military drones”.

Bahrain, which hosts the US Navy’s Fifth Fleet, said its air defences intercepted the attack, and blasts were heard over the capital, Manama, according to the AFP news agency.

It was the third Iranian drone attack on Bahrain in five days after a lull of several weeks. Friday’s strike was the first Iranian attack on a Gulf country since early September, AFP reported. Reuters said it came after a Bahraini court sentenced 64 people, mostly Shia clerics, to life in prison for allegedly colluding with Iran.

Democrat Peltola wins in Alaska, securing 56-44 US Senate majority

■ Democrat Mary Peltola defeated Republican incumbent Dan Sullivan in Alaska's Senate race, giving Democrats a projected 56-44 majority and their largest Senate advantage since 2009.

Web Desk

WASHINGTON

Democrat Mary Peltola won Alaska's US Senate race on projections from US media showed, defeating Republican incumbent Dan Sullivan and ?giving her party its ninth flip of the midterm elections and a commanding 56-44 Senate majority.

Peltola won 50% of first-place votes to Sullivan's 46%, enough to clear the 50% threshold and avoid additional rounds under Alaska's ranked-choice voting system.

Trump won Alaska by 13 percentage points in 2024, but voter ?frustration with the high cost of living and the state's strong independent political streak put it back in play for Democrats.



"As a lifelong Alaskan who has dedicated my career to serving our state, there is no greater honor than having Alaskans’ support in our fight to take on corporate greed, lower costs, and put Alaska first," Peltola said on X after media projected her victory. "Thank you, Alaska. Let’s get to work."

Alaska's isolated communities can make its election counts unusually lengthy.

Explosion heard in Saudi capital, missiles intercepted

The Saudi-led coalition fighting the Houthis also said they intercepted two cruise missiles the latest in weeks of strikes targeting military, civilian and oil infrastructure.

Web Desk

JADAH

A powerful explosion rattled homes in Riyadh on Wednesday, AFP journalists and residents said, as Yemen's Iran-backed Houthis pressed their campaign of attacks against the kingdom.

The Saudi-led coalition fighting the Houthis also said they intercepted two cruise missiles -- the latest in weeks of strikes targeting military, civilian and oil infrastructure.

Residents said Wednesday's explosion came without warning, with no mobile-phone alert issued beforehand as is usually the case during aerial threats.



"The explosion was extremely loud," said a resident in northern Riyadh. "Hearing a blast without receiving a warning is very frightening."

An AFP journalist said doors throughout her home swung open and the lights briefly went out.

The location of the explosion was not immediately clear, but residents told AFP they saw smoke near Riyadh's airport in the northeast of the city.

In October, a deadly attack targeting Riyadh's King Khalid International Airport killed 14 people and injured hundreds, forcing the suspension of flights for two weeks.

Within minutes, the Saudi-led coalition fighting the Houthis said its air defences had intercepted and destroyed a cruise missile launched by the group towards the Riyadh region.

Earlier, the coalition had reported intercepting another cruise missile also heading for the same region.

Saudi civil defence authorities also said they had activated early warning systems in the southern regions of Jazan, Najran and Khamis Mushait, near the Yemeni border.

The Saudi-led coalition, which backs neighbouring Yemen's internationally recognised government in its war with the Houthis, has battled a surge in attacks since hostilities reignited in July. The long-running civil war in Yemen, one of the world's poorest countries, had been largely dormant after a ceasefire went into effect in 2022.

US, Iran exchange fire despite talks with mediators

Web Desk

TEHRAN

The US and Iran exchanged fire, with the US striking an Iranian missile launch site after Iran said it targeted a US military radar system in Bahrain, despite talks between Iran and mediators Oman and Qatar.

The latest back-and-forth between the US ?and Iran was a reminder of difficulties ending nearly nine months of war that have destabilised the Middle East, pushed up global energy prices and fueled US voter anger in November elections that punished President Donald Trump's Republican Party.

A US military official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said US

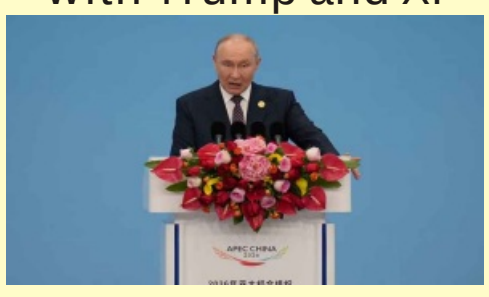


fighter jets fired on a Revolutionary Guards missile launch site on Qeshm Island in the Strait of Hormuz in response to Iran's "aggression targeting US personnel and assets."

Iranian media, citing ?an Iranian official, said the US attack did not damage infrastructure.

Iran's Revolutionary Guards said earlier on Tuesday they targeted a US military radar system at Bahrain's Sheikh Isa base, and ?warned Bahrain over its alliance with the US and stance towards Shi'ite clergy.

Russia's Putin says he expects big potential benefit from meeting with Trump and Xi



Web Desk

MASCOW

Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Wednesday he expected a big potential benefit from his upcoming meeting with US President Donald Trump and Chinese leader Xi Jinping.

Putin, who is due to meet Trump and Xi on Thursday, was speaking at the opening ceremony of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) CEO summit 2026 in China's southern technological and manufacturing hub of Shenzhen.

Citing what he said was a fragmented global economy and military-political risks, Putin said that partnership, rather than isolation, was needed, and that APEC provided a chance for a constructive exchange of views.

Trump's Board of Peace faults Israel and Hamas for failure to end Gaza war

■ The 12-page Board of Peace report is the body's second to the United Nations Security Council since the US-backed ceasefire came into effect 13 months ago

Web Desk

JERUSALEM

The body overseeing US President Donald Trump's plan to end the Gaza war accused both Israel and Hamas of failing to meet their commitments to end hostilities, leaving the population of Gaza in dire conditions and the ceasefire in danger of collapse.

The 12-page Board of Peace report, seen by Reuters, is the body's second to the United Nations Security Council since the US-backed ceasefire came into effect 13 months ago.

It offers a sobering assessment of progress made since then.

The board, established and headed by Trump, is expected to present the report's findings to a meeting of the council in New York at the end of November.



"The distance between what has been agreed and what is happening on the ground nonetheless remains the principal risk to the process," the report said, warning that "a ceasefire that delivers nothing visible cannot ?be sustained indefinitely."

The office of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and a spokesperson for the political office of Hamas did not immediately respond to requests for comment on the report.

While the ceasefire has halted major fighting, the wider plan, which calls for Hamas to disarm, Israeli troops to withdraw and reconstruction to begin, has effectively stalled since soon after it came into effect last year.

Hamas agreed in July to a Board of Peace roadmap to surrender its weapons and transfer governance of Gaza to a civilian transitional authority, but Israel rejected the roadmap, saying it will not withdraw until Hamas is dismantled.

Israel has carried out near-daily strikes on Gaza, while the report said Hamas fighters have also continued attacks on Israeli troops.

"Every day that Israel continues strikes against Hamas targets, it delays putting Hamas' agreement to the roadmap to the test," the report said.

"Meanwhile, Hamas militant activity continues, the commitment to cease all military activities has not been met in full by the parties, and the population faces another winter in tents and rubble."

Daily The Spokesman

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Farming leads PM's youth loan drive

The agriculture sector remains the single largest beneficiary of the prime minister's youth loan scheme, availing half of the Rs288 billion in loans disbursed during the past three years, but surprisingly, Rs102 billion of it went to fewer than 4,000 landlords, official statistics showed.

The details emerged amid a revision in the Prime Minister's Youth Business and Agriculture Loan Scheme (PMYBALs). The government has increased the maximum size of the subsidised loan from Rs7.5 million to Rs25 million besides marginally reducing the profit rates for the banks.



The loans were given at fixed interest rates of 5% and 7%, depending upon the size, to both the agriculture sector and businesses from 2023 to June 2026. Amid subsidy constraints, the prime minister has now approved an ambitious Rs292 billion disbursement target for this fiscal year alone, which is more than the total disbursements during the past three years.

According to the details, the government disbursed Rs288 billion among 570,290 beneficiaries from 2023 to June 2026. But over 35%, or Rs102 billion, of the total loans were availed by 3,957 individuals in the agriculture sector. They took loans in the range of Rs1.5 million to Rs7.5 million at an interest rate of 7%.

In addition, another Rs92 billion was availed by 20,405 businesses, bringing the total disbursements in the maximum loan category to Rs193 billion, availed by a total of 24,362 individuals and firms.

Pakistan's lending landscape is heavily tilted in favour of the government, which takes the maximum amount of loans due to its annual estimated budget financing requirements equal to 4% to 5% of the GDP. The remaining loans are largely availed by big businesses, leaving very little for small and medium-sized entrepreneurs.

The subsidised loan scheme, which was first approved in January 2023, has so far helped 570,290 borrowers. But 59% of those were from the farming business. The Economic Coordination Committee of the Cabinet this month revised the scheme by adding another loan category of Rs7.5 million to Rs25 million with a fixed interest rate of 8%.

It also reduced the profit margins of the commercial banks by 0.6% to Karachi-Interbank Offered Rate (Kibor) plus 2.4%.

The finance ministry spokesperson said the decision to reduce the earlier bank rate of Kibor+3% "will have a positive implication in terms of budgetary requirements of the scheme".

The scheme may face funding constraints as the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) has estimated the subsidy impact of Rs38 billion on the basis of Rs250 billion in disbursements for the current fiscal year. Compared to the requirement, the available funding was Rs21 billion, the central bank wrote to the federal government.

The fresh disbursement target of Rs292 billion during the current fiscal year is estimated to entail an additional subsidy-related budgetary requirement of Rs8 billion for FY27. The central bank said that the budget of Rs21 billion has been allocated under the scheme against the estimates of Rs38 billion.

However, the finance ministry spokesman said sufficient funds are available for the scheme for the current fiscal year.

The disbursements are being made as per the requirements and the finance ministry and the SBP continue to monitor the progress and make available any additional resources if and when required, the spokesman said.

The scheme is available to Pakistani citizens aged 18 to 45 with entrepreneurial potential, with loan sizes now divided into five tiers after the addition of a new category last week.

A new Tier-4 has been introduced, covering financing limits from Rs7.5 million up to Rs25 million with a proposed borrower rate of 8% and a tenor of up to eight years, including a grace period of up to one year to cater to medium enterprises seeking higher growth and employment generation.

The new tier four will have first-loss risk coverage up to 10% on a portfolio basis.

The finance ministry said an independent impact assessment conducted by the Commonwealth Secretariat of the United Kingdom indicated that the enterprises availing Rs1.5 million to Rs7.5 million demonstrated a high employment multiplier of 15 per loan; therefore, the addition of the proposed new Tier 4 of Rs7.5 million to Rs25 million is intended to enable enterprise expansion and maximise employment outcomes.

The government plans to give Rs150 billion in subsidised loans at an 8% interest rate in the range of Rs7.5 million to Rs25 million during the current fiscal year.

The Cough We Ignore



Dr. Muhammad Tayyab Khan

If you or someone in your family has been coughing every morning for months, you might put it down to the weather, dust or simply getting older. It is easy to get used to it. The cough becomes part of the morning routine, the mucus that comes with it hardly seems unusual, and even the breathlessness while climbing stairs or the wheezing at night may not seem like reasons to worry. Most people find a way to explain these symptoms away, especially when they develop gradually.

But when these symptoms persist, they could be early signs of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), a progressive lung condition that makes breathing increasingly difficult.

COPD is a health crisis that rarely gets the attention it deserves. It is the third leading cause of death worldwide and has no cure. According to the report published by the World Health Organization (WHO) in June 2026, it claimed 3.4 million lives, approximately six percent of all deaths.

The condition includes chronic bronchitis, in which the airways stay inflamed and clogged with mucus, and emphysema, in which the lungs' air sacs are gradually destroyed. It creeps up slowly, until even a short walk to the shop leaves a person gasping, and diagnosis often comes late.

COPD can develop for several reasons, but smoking is one of the leading causes. Air pollution, smoke from cooking fires and workplace dust can also contribute, which is why the disease affects non-smokers too. Much of the resulting lung damage is irreversible, making prevention and early intervention essential.

For smokers, the greatest concern is the smoke produced when tobacco burns. A cigarette is a small, efficient combustion engine, and its smoke contains more than 7,000 chemicals that irritate the airways. The US Surgeon General has concluded that these chemicals inflame the delicate lining of the lungs and cause permanent damage that leads to COPD. The damage is largely driven by the toxic chemicals released when tobacco burns, while nicotine is primarily responsible for addiction.

Quitting tobacco is the ideal outcome for a smoker with COPD and the most effective intervention we have, but medicine has to treat the patient in front of it, not the one it wishes it had. Many keep smoking after diagnosis, having tried patches, gum, counselling and medication without lasting success, and for them "quit or nothing" is not a strategy. It is a shrug.

The principle behind tobacco harm reduction is not unfamiliar. As the health risks of burning wood and coal became clearer, many households moved towards cleaner cooking fuels. Transport is undergoing a similar shift, with electric vehicles reducing dependence on combustion. The idea is to reduce exposure to harmful emissions. For smokers who struggle to quit, tobacco harm reduction follows a similar principle: seeking to reduce exposure to the toxic smoke produced by burning tobacco, while recognising that continued nicotine use is not risk-free and that long-term health risks depend on the evidence for each alternative.

But reducing harm must begin with recognising it. A persistent cough, regular wheezing or breathlessness should not be dismissed as part of ageing or everyday life. Early diagnosis, treatment and support can help people manage COPD, while reducing exposure to cigarette smoke, household fumes and polluted air can help prevent further damage.

COPD cannot be cured, and the lung damage it causes is often permanent. But its progression can be slowed, particularly by quitting smoking and avoiding harmful exposure. That morning cough may seem harmless today, but it could be the lungs warning of something far more serious. The sooner we listen, the better the chance of protecting the breath we still have.

The Count That Was Never Taken: What the 1947 Record Says About Jammu

By: Muhammad Waleed



Amanullah Khan Naqshbandi was travelling with a convoy of Muslim migrants out of Jammu on 5 November 1947 when it was attacked. He survived. Seventeen of his relatives did not. His account is one of the few places where their deaths are written down at all. There is no official list that carries their names, no register of the villages emptied around them. Every 6 November, families across Pakistan, Azad Kashmir and the diaspora mark the anniversary, and every year they do it without a record to point to.What is missing from 1947 in what is today Indian-Occupied Jammu and Kashmir is not testimony. It is a count. No government, before or after the Maharaja's accession, set out to establish how many people were killed, how many fled and how many simply disappeared from the record. That uncertainty has too often been mistaken for proof that little happened.

The 1941 Census of India gives the only firm baseline. Jammu Province, as the census defined it, held 1,981,433 people, of whom 1,212,405, or 61.19 percent, were Muslim. In Jammu district alone, Muslims numbered 158,630, about 37 percent of the population. By 1961, the first full census taken after Partition, the district's Muslim share had fallen to 51,690 people, roughly 10 percent. No census was held in the state in 1951, which is precisely the year a count closest to the violence would have told us the most.

Contemporaries wrote down what they saw. Horace Alexander, a Quaker relief worker who spent the last months of 1947 among refugees in Punjab and Kashmir, wrote in The Spectator on 16 January 1948 that Hindus and Sikhs in the Jammu area had driven thousands of Muslim neighbours from their homes, "apparently with at least the tacit consent of State authority." Some two hundred thousand, he added, were "not accounted for." On 10 August 1948, The Times of London reported that 237,000 Muslims in the eastern districts had been "systematically exterminated, unless they escaped to Pakistan along the border," naming Dogra state forces, aided by Hindus and Sikhs, as responsible.

Read exactly, the two reports do not describe the same thing. Alexander wrote of people unaccounted for. The Times wrote of people killed or fled. Later writing often folds both figures into a single death toll that neither source gives. Christopher Snedden, among the more careful historians of the period, has placed the number of Muslims killed in the province somewhere between 20,000 and 100,000. A range that wide is not a failure of research. It is what happens when nobody set the 1941 population against the dead, the missing and the displaced while it was still possible to do so.

There were reasons the count was never taken. By early October 1947 the Maharaja's administration had placed the leading local newspapers under pre-censorship, barred papers from outside the state, and interned the Associated Press correspondent. After the accession, neither the Government of India nor the new state administration ordered a public inquiry into the killings.

Horace Alexander and Richard Symonds did investigate specific incidents at the request of the Indian and Pakistani governments, and Gandhi acknowledged the killings publicly before the year was out. Neither effort produced a casualty register, a judicial finding or an archive a historian can walk into today.

Other states facing comparable crimes have chosen differently. Argentina's National Commission on the Disappearance of Persons documented 8,960 cases within a year of being established in 1983. The United Nations Updated Set of Principles on combating impunity treats the right to know and the preservation of archives as obligations that do not expire with the event. India, as a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, is bound by Article 2(3) to provide an effective remedy. None of this can be applied backward to punish 1947. It can be applied to the choice, still being made today, to keep the record closed.

Nawaz pledges renewed development drive in AJK under 100-day plan

The PML-N president also criticised the performance of previous governments in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, claiming that those who governed the province for 15 years had failed to deliver meaningful development.

Recalling his tenure as prime minister, Nawaz said Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves had reached $24 billion, while his government had eliminated daily power outages lasting up to 18 hours. He said his administration had constructed motorways across the country, completed the Lowari Tunnel and ended Pakistan's dependence on the International Monetary Fund.

Nawaz said his government's removal had disrupted development projects, claiming that more than 50 additional projects would have been completed had his administration remained in office.

He challenged his political opponents to compare their development record with that of the PML-N.

Referring to his earlier remarks about becoming the prime minister of AJK, Nawaz clarified that he had made the statement in jest.

He said he considered himself prime minister following Iftikhar Ali Gillani's election because they shared the same enthusiasm for the region's development.

Nawaz said he would continue visiting AJK to review development projects and assess progress on the government's commitments.

During the meeting, the leadership discussed public welfare, reconstruction, development schemes and the implementation of election promises.

The federal and Punjab governments reaffirmed their commitment to supporting AJK's development and prosperity.

Later, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif inaugurated the reconstructed Rathoa Haryam Bridge in AJK by unveiling a plaque.

Nawaz Sharif, the AJK president and prime minister, also attended the inauguration. Shehbaz said the bridge's completion marked an important milestone in the region's development and would improve transport links between Mirpur and surrounding areas.

He said the project would provide modern travel facilities to residents and promote commercial and economic activities in the region.



November : Government's Reforms Deliver Largest LPG Shipment as SLL Receives Cargo of 15,000 Metric Tons.

LPG prices drop by Rs50 per kg in Karachi as Iranian supplies resume

- LPG prices in Karachi have fallen by Rs50 per kilogram to Rs450 following the resumption of Iranian supplies, with further reductions expected.

Business Reporter

KARACHI



Liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) prices in Karachi have declined by Rs50 per kilogram following the resumption of supplies from Iran, bringing the retail rate down to Rs450 per kg, with further reductions expected.

According to details, LPG prices in the port city have witnessed a significant decrease as supplies from Iran resume, easing pressure on consumers who had been facing sharply higher fuel costs.

The latest reduction has brought the per-kilogram retail price down from around Rs500 to Rs450, while further declines are anticipated if supply conditions continue to improve.

Previously, LPG prices in Karachi had surged to Rs600 per kg following the suspension of supplies from Iran, creating additional financial pressure on households and businesses relying on the fuel.

SECP slashes mobile app loan interest rates by 67pc

- The SECP has directed mobile loan companies to update their applications and related documentation within 15 days to comply with the revised requirements.

Special Correspondent

ISLAMABAD



The Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) has reduced the annual interest rate on loans offered through mobile applications by 67 per cent, introducing new restrictions aimed at protecting borrowers from excessive borrowing costs and mounting debt.

The regulator has issued a new circular, setting the maximum annual interest rate on digital app-based loans at 90 per cent, down from the previous ceiling of 274 per cent.

Under the revised framework, the daily cost of borrowing Rs10,000 will stand at Rs24.66. All fees, charges and other costs will be included in the prescribed loan cost to ensure greater transparency for borrowers.

The SECP said the reduction was intended to protect consumers from excessive financing costs and prevent them from falling into unsustainable debt.

The new rules also cap digital app-based loans at Rs50,000, with a maximum repayment period of 90 days.

Borrowers making early repayments will only be charged for the period during which the loan remained outstanding. Furthermore, lending companies will not be allowed to impose late payment penalties during the first three days after the repayment deadline.

Govt approves construction of two M-6 motorway sections under public-private partnership

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD



The government has approved the construction of the first two sections of the 306-kilometre Hyderabad-Sukkur M-6 Motorway under a public-private partnership (PPP) model, paving the way for private investment in the country's major infrastructure projects.

The decision was taken at the 46th meeting of the Public Private Partnership Authority (P3A) Board, chaired by P3A Chairman Muhammad Ali. The board approved the construction of the first two sections, covering a combined distance of 121 kilometres, and appointed the Asian Development Bank (ADB) as transaction adviser for both sections.

Under the approved arrangement, the National Highway Authority (NHA) will invite bids from eligible local and foreign investors for the construction and operation of the motorway sections.

Private investors will operate the motorway for 25 years and recover their investment through toll collection.

The government will provide financial support exclusively for the first section, while the remaining arrangements will be undertaken through the public-private partnership framework.

The six-lane M-6 Motorway will stretch 306 kilometres from Hyderabad to Sukkur and will be constructed in five sections.The OPEC Fund for International Development and the Islamic Development Bank will provide financial assistance for the remaining three sections, covering the Nawabshah-Sukkur portion of the motorway.



Pakistan's IT exports hit record $453 million in October 2026

Business Reporter

ISLAMABAD

Pakistan's information technology (IT) sector showed strong growth, with IT and telecom services exports reaching a record $453 million in October 2026,

The latest figures also reveal that the country's technology exports increased by 17% during the first four months of the current fiscal year, highlighting the growing contribution of digital services to Pakistan's economy.

According to the latest official data, Pakistan's exports of telecommunications, computers, and information services reached $1.699 billion during July-October FY2026-27, compared to $1.445 billion during the corresponding period of the previous fiscal year.

The increase reflects continued growth in the country's IT services sector, which has emerged as an important source of foreign exchange earnings.

This represents a year-on-year increase of approximately 17.4%, compared to the $386 million recorded in October 2025.

National Savings revises profit rates on various savings schemes

- Pakistan's National Savings Directorate revises profit rates, increasing returns on selected short-term and Islamic schemes while maintaining existing rates on several certificates.

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD



The Directorate of National Savings has revised profit rates on several savings schemes, increasing returns on selected certificates and accounts while maintaining existing rates on a number of other investment products.

According to a new notification issued by the Directorate of National Savings, profit rates on certain certificates and accounts have been increased, while the previous rates for several schemes remain unchanged.

Under the revised notification, the profit rate for the first five profit payments on Special Savings Certificates has been set at 11.8 percent, while the rate for the sixth profit payment will remain unchanged at 12.8 percent. No changes have been announced in the profit rate for Defence Savings Certificates.

Similarly, the profit rate on Regular Income Certificates will remain at 12.12 percent. Investors in Behbood Savings Certificates, Pensioners' Benefit Accounts and Shuhada Family Accounts will continue to receive returns at the existing rate of 12.96 percent.

The Directorate has also increased profit rates on Short-Term Savings Certificates.

Under the new rates, three-month certificates will offer a return of 11.56 percent, while six-month certificates will carry a profit rate of 11.90 percent. The rate for one-year certificates has been set at 12.14 percent.

Meanwhile, the profit rate on ordinary Savings Accounts has been fixed at 10.50 percent.

Changes have also been introduced in the rates offered under Islamic savings products. The one-year Sarwa Islamic Term Account will now offer a profit rate of 12.04 percent, while the three-year Sarwa Islamic Term Certificate will carry a revised rate of 11.98 percent.

However, the profit rate on the five-year Sarwa Islamic Term Certificate will remain unchanged at 12.12 percent.

Additionally, the expected profit rate on Sarwa Islamic Savings Accounts has been increased to 12.04 percent.

The revised notification covers conventional and Islamic savings products offered by the National Savings Directorate, with adjustments varying according to the type and maturity period of each scheme.

Finance Minister Aurangzeb meets with Singapore DPM

- Federal Minister Senator Aurangzeb congratulated Singapore on its forthcoming ASEAN Chairmanship in 2027, noting that Pakistan assumed the Chairmanship of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO).

Commerce Reporter

ISLAMABAD



Finance Minister Senator Mohammad Aurangzeb on Wednesday held a meeting with Deputy Prime Minister of Singapore and Minister for Energy, Industries and Trade Gan Kim Yong and discussed various measures to strengthen trade relations between the two countries, During the meeting, the minister highlighted the significance of the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Pakistan and Singapore this year, a testament of our longstanding relations.

The Finance Minister observed that bilateral engagements were gaining momentum. He recalled the recent visit of Singapore's Foreign Minister H.E. Dr Vivian Balakrishnan to Pakistan.

Federal Minister Senator Aurangzeb congratulated Singapore on its forthcoming ASEAN Chairmanship in 2027, noting that Pakistan assumed the Chairmanship of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO).

He underscored the potential for closer collaboration between the two countries in areas including finance, artificial intelligence, fintech, trade and investment.

He noted that businesses, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), need to engage directly to better understand the commercial opportunities between the two countries.The two sides also discussed opportunities to enhance trade in Pakistani food and agricultural products, with the Finance Minister noting the potential to further expand their presence in the Singapore market.

Ayaz calls for stronger Pakistan-US trade, economic ties

- Ayaz Sadiq called for stronger Pakistan-US trade and investment ties through business partnerships, institutional cooperation and investor-friendly policies.

STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD



Speaker of National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq Wednesday emphasized the need to further strengthen trade and economic relations between Pakistan and the United States, stressing enhanced engagement between the business communities of the two countries to promote bilateral trade and investment.

He expressed these views during a meeting with a delegation of the American Business Council at Parliament House.

Minister of State for Finance Bilal Azhar Kiani was also present.

Welcoming the delegation, the Speaker appreciated the business community's role in strengthening Pakistan-US economic relations and said Pakistan offered vast opportunities for trade and investment across various sectors.

He underscored the importance of exploring these opportunities through stronger business-to-business engagement, institutional linkages and expanded commercial partnerships between the two countries.

Ayaz Sadiq also briefed the delegation on Pakistan's parliamentary system and legislative procedures, highlighting Parliament's role in facilitating economic and commercial activities.

He said creating a conducive environment for trade and investment was among the government's key priorities, adding that investor-friendly policies had been introduced to facilitate the business community and encourage both domestic and foreign investment.

Emphasizing the need for sustained engagement and mutual cooperation, the Speaker called for strengthening institutional and business-to-business linkages to unlock the full potential of bilateral economic relations.

Reaffirming Parliament's commitment to supporting the business sector, he assured the delegation of all possible cooperation through legislation to address business-related concerns and safeguard the interests of the business community.

He said Parliament would continue to play an effective role in promoting economic and commercial activities, while parliamentary cooperation and sustained dialogue remained essential to further consolidating Pakistan-US relations.

Describing overseas Pakistanis as a valuable national asset, Ayaz Sadiq highlighted their significant potential to contribute to the country's economic growth and development.

The American Business Council delegation thanked the Speaker for the warm welcome at Parliament House and appreciated his keen interest in addressing the concerns of the business community.

Second Test: Pakistan's massive lead leaves Sri Lanka in trouble

● Sri Lanka trailed by 153 runs with seven wickets

SPORTS REPORTER

Rawalpindi



Pakistan took control of the second and final Test after leaving the visitors trailing by 153 runs, as Sri Lanka finished the day at 74-3 in 22 overs at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium on Wednesday.

The three-wicket haul left Sri Lanka under mounting pressure as they struggled to recover from Pakistan's commanding first-innings lead. The visitors will resume their innings on day three with Pasindu Sooriyabandara (18) and Dhananjaya de Silva (24) at the crease.

Saqib Khan provided Pakistan with an early breakthrough, claiming his first wicket of the innings by dismissing Lahiru Udara for seven off 13 deliveries, including one boundary.

Dinesh Chandimal endured another disappointing outing before falling to Razaullah, while Aamer Jamal dismissed Kamindu Mendis for 16 off 25 balls, including three boundaries, leaving Sri Lanka reeling at 39-3 in 14.2 overs.

Dhananjaya de Silva and Pasindu Sooriyabandara then joined forces to steady the innings, forging a valuable partnership that helped Sri Lanka move past the 50-run mark and avoid further setbacks before stumps.

Pakistan's decision to bowl first paid dividends as Sri Lanka were dismissed for a below-par total, courtesy of an impressive bowling display by the pace attack, with Mohammad Abbas, Aamer Jamal and Razaullah leading the charge.

Captain Kusal Mendis led the visitors' batting effort with 32 off 50 deliveries, featuring five boundaries, while Sonal Dinusha contributed 21 off 40 balls. The remaining batters failed to reach double figures.

Pacers Mohammad Abbas, Aamer Jamal and Razaullah claimed three wickets each, while Saqib Khan chipped in with one.

In reply, Pakistan were bowled out for 325 in 87.5 overs in reply to Sri Lanka's first-innings total of 98, securing a substantial 227-run lead, thanks to Ghazi Ghori's maiden Test half-century and Razaullah's late blitz.

Lahiru Kumara led Sri Lanka's bowling attack with figures of 5/95 in 21.5 overs. Asitha Fernando picked up three wickets followed by one each for Milan Rathnayaka and Prabath Jayasuriya.

Pakistan made a steady start, with openers Azan Awais and Tayyab Arif sharing an 80-run partnership. Tayyab scored 46 off 82 deliveries, including six boundaries, before Fernando broke the stand. Azan then combined with Mohammad Taha to take Pakistan past Sri Lanka's total, but Prabath Jayasuriya dismissed Taha for eight, while Babar Azam fell to Kumara for eight.

Resuming at 121-3, Pakistan lost four wickets during the opening session. Azan departed for 47 off 104 deliveries, falling three runs short of his maiden Test half-century.

Saqib Khan and Saud Shakeel added 50 runs for the fifth wicket before Kumara dismissed Shakeel for 24 and Saqib for 37, leaving Pakistan struggling at 193-6.

Salman Ali Agha and Ghazi Ghori helped the hosts cross 200 before Fernando removed Salman for 21. Ghori subsequently partnered Aamer Jamal, who scored 12, adding 42 runs before Fernando struck again.



Pakistan and Sri Lanka fined for slow over-rates in Rawalpindi Test

SPORTS DESK

ISLAMABAD

Pakistan and Sri Lanka have been fined for maintaining slow over-rates during the first match of their two-Test series in Rawalpindi.

According to the International Cricket Council (ICC), Pakistan were fined 25% of their match fees, while Sri Lanka received a 50% fine. One World Test Championship point was also deducted from each team.The ICC said Pakistan were found to be five overs short of the required rate, while Sri Lanka fell 15 overs behind the scheduled over-rate.

Emirates ICC International Panel of Match Referees member Dean Cosker imposed the sanctions on both teams. Under the ICC Code of Conduct, players are fined 5% of their match fees for every over their team falls short of the required rate, subject to a maximum penalty of 50%.Pakistan captain Babar Azam and Sri Lanka captain Kusal Mendis admitted the offences and accepted the penalties, eliminating the need for formal hearings.

England thrash Australia to win ODI series

■ Duckett smashes 133 before Baker takes four wickets to hammer the hosts



SPORTS Desk

HOBART

Ben Duckett smashed 133 and Sonny Baker took four wickets as England hammered Australia by 97 runs to win the third one-day international at Hobart on Wednesday and with it the series.

After losing the first ODI in Perth, England emphatically bounced back at Adelaide and were in full control again, posting 328 then dismissing the hosts for 231 in the 46th over.

On a day when Australian cricket was again consumed by allegations around the "Sandpapergate" ball-tampering scandal, England skipper Harry Brook won the toss and opted to bat.

Duckett was the anchor, keeping his cool as wickets fell around him with a seventh ODI century, off 94 balls. Will Jacks chipped in with 59.

Australia made a horror start to the run chase, losing openers Travis Head (4) and skipper Mitchell Marsh (1) inside the first two overs.

Head fell fourth ball, edging Gus Atkinson to Joe Root at slip with Marsh going six balls later to Baker, this time taken in the slips by Brook.

Josh Inglis (14) followed them back to the sheds, nicking Baker to wicketkeeper Jordan Cox to leave Australia flailing at 34-3.

Matt Renshaw helped steady the ship and was looking good on 55 when he was caught and bowled by spinner Liam Dawson.

When Alex Carey was run out for 37 and Cameron Green retired hurt with blood streaming from his mouth after being hit on the grill, it looked grim for Australia at 119-5 and they were never in the hunt.

Baker ended with 4-45 and Dawson 3-42.

England were aggressive in their batting with opener Tom Banton, who blasted a century in Adelaide, smacking a quick-fire 44 to set the tone before Marsh grabbed a stunning catch backpedalling to remove him.

Duckett took up the mantle, reaching his 50 off 35 balls with support from Root.

Rashid Malik stuns top-seeded Indian pair to reach MT700 doubles final

SPECIAL REPORTER

ISLAMABAD



Pakistan's senior tennis campaigner and former Davis Cup player Rashid Ahmad Malik delivered an outstanding performance to storm into the men's 55+ doubles final of the ITF Masters MT700 Tennis Tournament, defeating the top-seeded Indian combination in emphatic fashion at the Royal Cliff Hotel, Pattaya.

Partnering Germany's Axel Hampe, Malik dominated the semifinal to overpower India's Bal Krishan Bhatia and Jaiprakash Nishad 6-1, 6-2 in a commanding display that lasted less than an hour. The Pakistani senior player was instrumental in the convincing victory, showcasing his powerful serving, sharp volleys, accurate groundstrokes and exceptional court coverage.

Malik dictated the pace of rallies, applied constant pressure on the opposition and capitalised on crucial opportunities to keep the Indian pair on the defensive throughout the encounter. His tactical awareness, anticipation and attacking approach proved decisive as the top seeds struggled to counter the aggressive play of the Pakistan-German combination. The impressive triumph secured Malik another opportunity to compete for an international Masters title.

Meanwhile, Pakistan's Waqar Nisar and Hong Kong's Hon Lim Yue could not progress to the men's 70+ doubles final after losing their semifinal against the second-seeded combination of Hungary's Laszlo Bots and Hong Kong's Sau Kei David Li.

The Pakistani contingent acknowledged the valuable support of The Bank of Punjab, Lahore Gymkhana Club, JDW Group, Revive by Gatorade and Jamal Polymers for sponsoring and facilitating Pakistan's participation in international Masters tennis competitions.

India beat Pakistan 2-1 to win 10th SAFF Football Championship title

■ India beat Pakistan 2-1 in the SAFF Football Championship final, winning their 10th title after Sandeep scored a dramatic 88th-minute winner.

SPORTS DESK

ISLAMABAD



India defeated Pakistan 2-1 in the SAFF Football Championship final to lift the title for a record 10th time, denying their neighbours a historic maiden triumph in the competition.

The closely contested final, held in Bangladesh's capital Dhaka, saw Pakistan take an early advantage before India staged a second-half comeback to secure the championship with a late winner.

Pakistan made a promising start and took the lead through Alamgir Ghazi in the closing moments of the first half. His goal put the Green Shirts in a strong position heading into the break, raising hopes of a historic victory.

However, India responded after the interval, with Sohail Bhat finding the net to bring his side level and shift the momentum of the contest.

Pakistan's challenge became more difficult early in the second half when Junaid Shah was shown a red card for kicking an Indian player.

The dismissal forced Pakistan to continue with 10 players for the remainder of the match, putting additional pressure on their defence as India pushed for a winner.

Despite being a player down, Pakistan continued to compete, but India's attacking pressure eventually paid off.

India's Sandeep delivered the decisive moment in the 88th minute, scoring the winning goal to give his team a 2-1 victory in the final.

The result secured India's 10th overall SAFF Football Championship title and marked their third consecutive triumph in the tournament.

For Pakistan, reaching the final was itself a significant milestone, as the national side had made it to the championship's showpiece match for the first time.

However, they were unable to turn that historic achievement into a maiden title, with India's late strike settling the contest in Dhaka.

Cricket Australia to open 'Sandpapergate' forum but no new probe

■ Interim chairman David Boon says forum aims to end years of damaging scrutiny around the scandal

SPORTS DESK

BRITAIN



Cricket Australia on Wednesday ruled out reopening an investigation into the 2018 ball-tampering scandal but will launch an independent forum for players to share their version of events as a "circuit breaker".

Festering wounds over what happened in the third Test at Cape Town eight years ago reopened last week when Usman Khawaja released his autobiography.

In the book, he alleged that the whole team knew about the plot to rough up the ball with sandpaper to make it swing, an allegation strenuously denied by current captain Pat Cummins.

A Cricket Australia probe at the time concluded only skipper Steve Smith, his deputy David Warner and Cameron Bancroft were in the know, with all three sent home in disgrace and banned.

Warner, who has backed Khawaja's new version of events, over the weekend accused CA of conducting "a shoddy investigation", claiming not all players were interviewed.

CA chief executive Todd Greenberg said the past week had been an "incredibly difficult and uncomfortable time for the game and for everyone who was involved".

But, speaking in Hobart ahead of Australia's one-day clash with England on Wednesday, Greenberg was adamant that "the investigation has been completed" and ruled out making it public, citing confidentiality.

Interim chairman David Boon said instead that a forum, likely led by a former judge, would be established.

But there would be no new sanctions coming out of it.

"After careful discussion, we agreed to establish a forum that will allow players and staff involved in the events of South Africa in 2018 to share their experiences and their perspectives," he said.

"We believe it is time for a circuit breaker. This is not about litigating the past. It is about giving the opportunity to those involved to have their voices heard.

"Australian cricket is at its strongest when we're united, and we owe it to everyone who loves the game to make every reasonable effort to move forward together with understanding, respect and perspective."

'Game needs to move on'

Cricket Australia would not commit to making the contents of the forum public, which it hopes can be wrapped up within a month.

Daily The Spokesman

Thursday
November 19,2026

Ahsan Iqbal says plan for 14 provinces under discussion

■ Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal highlights a proposed 14-province structure, Islamabad's self-governance model, and urgent administrative reforms before March 2027.



Our Correspondent

ISLAMABAD

Federal Minister for Planning, Development & Special Initiatives Ahsan Iqbal emphasized on the possibility of more provinces in Pakistan as a true source of development and prosperity.

Talking to a newspaper, he furthur said that he heard of four provinces each in Punjab and Sindh.

"Islamabad needs legislative forum and self-governance scheme," he added.

Ahsan Iqbal says he has heard of a plan for 14 provinces in Pakistan, with four in Punjab, four in Sindh, three in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and three in Balochistan.

There has also been discussion about giving Islamabad separate provincial status, he added.

The minister said he had written to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif in September, recommending the formation of a committee to examine the debate around creating additional provinces. However, no progress had been made on the matter so far. On Islamabad's governance, Iqbal said the prime minister had tasked him with developing an alternative administrative model for the capital.

"After examining capital cities around the world, we presented a hybrid model of government between a local government and a provincial assembly," he said, "Islamabad needs a legislative forum and a self-governance scheme."

The model envisages a legislative forum for Islamabad, as legislation concerning the capital currently has to be taken up by parliament, comprising the National Assembly and Senate.



Muzaffarabad: President of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Dr. Muhammad Najeeb Khan, welcomes Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif upon her arrival in Muzaffarabad.



Malik Ahmad Khan questions PPP's opposition to Sindh's division

Staff Reporter

LAHORE

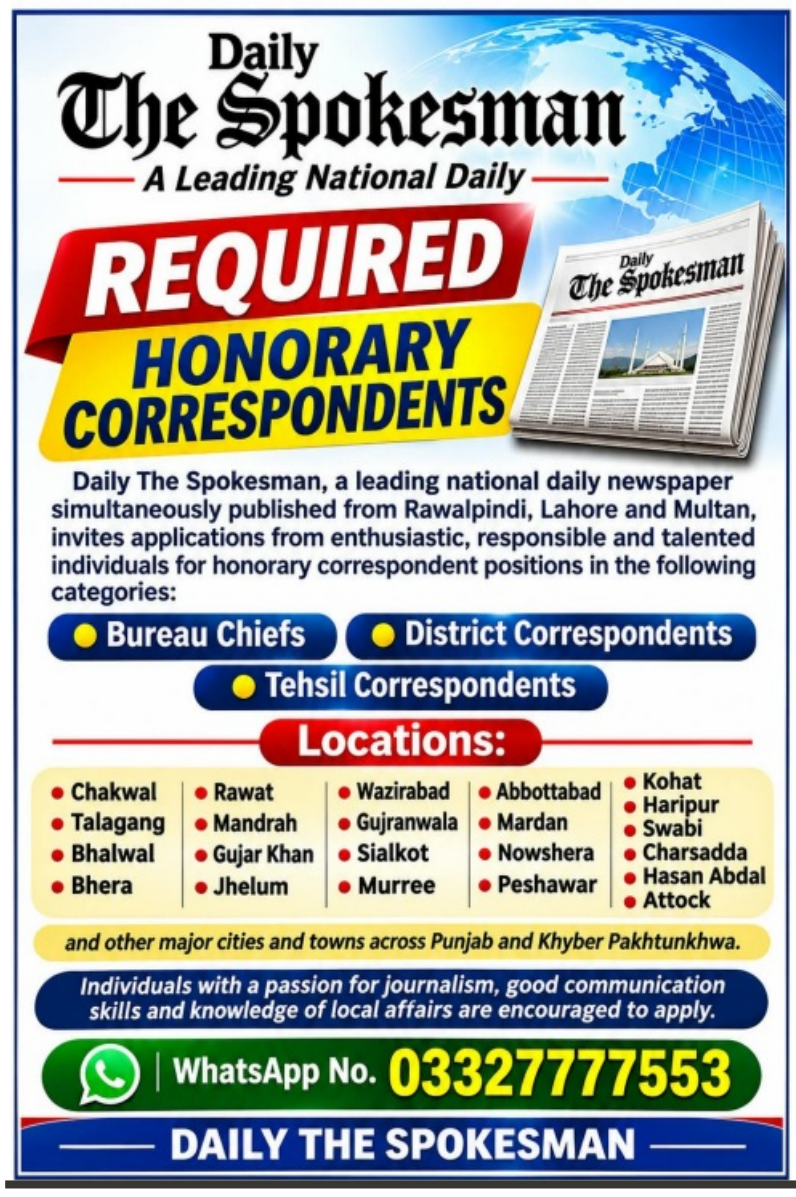
Punjab Assembly Speaker Malik Muhammad Ahmad Khan has called for continued debate on the creation of new provinces, questioning the Pakistan Peoples Party's (PPP) position on the division of Sindh in light of its past support for a resolution concerning the division of Punjab.

Addressing a press conference in Lahore, Malik Ahmad Khan questioned the basis for warnings of bloodshed over the proposed division of Sindh and asked how discussing the creation of new provinces could be considered unconstitutional.

He said discussions on establishing new provinces should continue, adding that the Constitution provided a mechanism for holding a referendum. He also praised President Asif Ali Zardari, saying his strength lay in listening to different viewpoints and resolving issues through dialogue and negotiations.

The Punjab Assembly speaker pointed out that the PPP had voted in favour of a resolution concerning the division of Punjab. He questioned why the party would oppose the division of Sindh after supporting a similar proposal regarding Punjab.

He stressed that dialogue on the creation of new provinces should continue and said political differences could be resolved through negotiations.Commenting on PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari's recent remarks about Sindhi nationalism, Malik Ahmad Khan said the subject also deserved discussion. He added that the concept of unity and its historical background should be debated as well. He questioned the apparent difference between the PPP's parliamentary position on the division of Punjab and its current stance on the division of Sindh.



DPM Dar directs to maintain sugar price stability across domestic markets

STAFF REPORTER

LAHORE

Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar on Wednesday chaired a meeting of the Cabinet Committee on the Export of Surplus Sugar here and instructed the authorities concerned to maintain price stability across domestic markets.

The committee examined the overall demand and supply balance of sugar across the country, reviewing current production and consumption estimates and supply chain logistics to ensure uninterrupted availability in local markets.

The deputy prime minister said that in line with the directions of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, the government remained fully committed to taking all possible steps to facilitate the general public and shield consumers while at the same time protecting the interests of the farmers.

Pakistan, Ethiopia Agree to Strengthen Bilateral Ties Through Parliamentary Diplomacy, Trade and Investment

● Ethiopian Ambassador Dr. Oumer Hussien Oba meets NA Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq; both sides emphasize high-level exchanges and exploring new avenues of cooperation

Muzaffar Ahmad Bhatti

ISLAMABAD



H.E. Dr. Oumer Hussien Oba, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, on Wednesday held a productive meeting with the Honorable Speaker of the National Assembly, H.E. Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, at the Parliament House, Islamabad.The two sides discuss ways to strengthen bilateral relations by enhancing cooperation across various areas including parliamentary diplomacy, trade, investment, culture and tourism. They also emphasized the importance of strengthening parliamentary relations, encouraging exchanges of high-level delegations and identifying new areas of mutual cooperation.H.E. Ambassador Dr. Oumer reaffirmed the deep-rooted and long-standing bilateral relations between the two nations, highlighting their shared history, culture, and values. Emphasizing Ethiopia's strategic positioning as the seat of the African Union, the Ambassador noted that Pakistan can leverage its relations with Ethiopia to significantly increase its footprint across Africa. The Ambassador reiterated his commitment to further strengthen the two countries bilateral relations by encouraging exchange of high-level delegations to further increase their cooperation across various areas.

Government to Screen 70 Million People for Hepatitis C Nationwide, Announces Mustafa Kamal

● Free testing worth Rs7,000 and medicines worth Rs68,000 for diagnosed patients; minister also announces restoration of Sehat Sahulat Card facility for Islamabad journalists

STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD



Federal Minister for Health Mustafa Kamal has announced that the government will conduct hepatitis screening of 70 million people across the country, providing free testing and medication to those diagnosed with Hepatitis C.Addressing the media at the National Press Club (NPC) in Islamabad on Tuesday, he said the government was offering free hepatitis screening tests worth Rs7,000, while patients testing positive for Hepatitis C would receive medication worth Rs68,000 free of charge throughout Pakistan.He said the programme had initially been launched in Islamabad, Azad Jammu and Kashmir, and Gilgit-Baltistan. Digital devices had been provided to relevant operators, while an agreement had also been signed with the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) to facilitate the initiative.The minister was speaking during the inauguration and inspection of a hepatitis screening camp organised at the National Press Club in collaboration with Akbar Niazi Teaching Hospital.Mustafa Kamal said Pakistan had one of the highest numbers of Hepatitis C patients in the world, warning that the disease could remain undetected for years and eventually lead to liver cancer if not diagnosed and treated in time.He said the government was following Egypt's successful model to eliminate hepatitis, adding that Hepatitis C could be treated within three months. He urged citizens to take full advantage of the free screening programme.Health Cards for JournalistsThe federal minister announced that the Sehat Sahulat Card facility for journalists in Islamabad was being relaunched. Under the initiative, free treatment would be available at 15 private hospitals.He said representatives of the Sehat Sahulat Programme and relevant institutions would visit the National Press Club to discuss the initiative.

IHC orders medical examination, improved jail facilities for Bushra Bibi

● The Islamabad High Court directs authorities to provide Bushra Bibi with a special doctor and ensure proper sanitation in her cell following complaints about jail conditions.

STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD



The Islamabad High Court (IHC) has issued directions to the relevant authorities to address complaints raised by Bushra Bibi, wife of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan, regarding difficulties she allegedly faced in jail, including concerns about her health and living conditions.

A division bench comprising Chief Justice Sarfraz Dogar and Justice Muhammad Asif heard appeals filed by Imran Khan and Bushra Bibi against their convictions in the £190 million case.

Barrister Salman Safdar and Sardar Latif Khosa appeared on behalf of Imran Khan and Bushra Bibi, while NAB special prosecutors Javed Arshad and Rafi Maqsood, along with Islamabad Advocate General Naveed Hayat Malik, were also present in court.

At the beginning of the hearing, the court directed all relevant parties to maintain silence. Subsequently, the defence lawyers submitted a fresh miscellaneous application concerning Bushra Bibi's health and alleged incidents inside the jail.

The defence counsel informed the court that Bushra Bibi was facing a serious eyesight problem and that the court had also been apprised of the need for surgery, warning that her existing medical condition could further affect her vision.

During the proceedings, the lawyer also claimed that seven small-sized snakes had been found in the room of Bushra Bibi's cell. According to the counsel, jail staff killed the snakes and subsequently covered the area with cement.

Chief Justice Sarfraz Dogar said appropriate measures would be taken to address all concerns regarding Bushra Bibi's health and that medical facilities would be provided to her in accordance with jail rules.

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