



Daily The Spokesman

A Leading National Daily



فرمان رسول ﷺ
ہم سے محمد بن محمد نے بیان کیا کہ ہم سے نبی
بن سید نے بیان کیا ان سے شام نے بیان
کیا کہ کچھ کویر سے اللہ نے فریاد اور
آئیں عائشہ رضی اللہ عنہا نے کہ نبی کریم
صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم نے ایک کچھ (عبداللہ بن
زبیر) کو اپنی گود میں بٹھایا اور مجھ پر چاکر اس
کے منہ میں دیہا اس نے آپ پر پیشاب کر دیا
آپ نے پانی نکھو کر اس پر بہا دیا۔
(بخاری: صفحہ نمبر 6002)
Barkat Rice Mills
(Pvt) Limited



President expresses grief over loss of lives in traffic accidents

President Asif Ali Zardari Saturday expressed grief over tragic traffic accidents in Sargodha and Ormara. In a statement, he said he was deeply saddened over loss of precious lives in accidents due to heavy fog in Sargodha and Ormara. He condoled with the families of the deceased and prayed for speedy recovery of the injured.



PM expresses grief over deadly traffic accidents near Sargodha and Ormara

In a statement, the prime minister offered prayers for the eternal peace and elevation of ranks of the deceased and extended heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families. He also prayed for patience and strength for the families to bear the irreparable loss.

Simultaneously published from Islamabad, Lahore and Multan

Rajab-ul-Murajjab 28, Sunday, January 18, 2026

www.dailyspokesman.net

@daily_spokesman



Daily Spokesman Vol: 19, Issue: 273 Price Rs. 25.00 Pages 8

Extreme cold in Khan Younis

Khan Younis: The humanitarian situation in the southern Gaza Strip, very dangerous especially for children and displaced people living in flimsy tents ill-equipped to withstand the cold weather. Residents are suffering from a lack of shelter and medical care, and a lack of heating supplies due to fuel shortages, amidst a stormy, cold, and rainy weather.



Photo: Wafa

President, PM convey best wishes for Saudi King's health



City Desk

for His Majesty's swift and complete recovery.

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif have conveyed sincere best wishes and prayers for the health of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, in a social media post, said the people of Pakistan hold His Majesty in the highest esteem.

On behalf of the government and the people of Pakistan, President Zardari extended heartfelt wishes

He said we join our Saudi brothers and sisters in praying for His Majesty's swift and complete recovery to full health, vitality and continued leadership.

US magazine backs Pakistan on IWT, warns India against weaponising water

Monitoring Desk

ISLAMABAD: A leading US magazine has strongly endorsed Pakistan's position on the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT), warning that India's recent actions could destabilise South Asia and turn water into a strategic weapon.

In an in-depth analysis, 'The National Interest' says India's move to suspend aspects of the Indus Waters Treaty marks a dangerous shift in regional water politics, with serious

legal, humanitarian and security consequences.

The magazine stresses that the Indus Waters Treaty remains legally binding and cannot be unilaterally suspended.

It recalls that in August 2025, the Permanent Court of Arbitration reaffirmed that India is obligated to "let flow" the waters of the western rivers — Indus, Jhelum and Chenab — for Pakistan's unrestricted use, regardless of political disputes.

Highlighting Pakistan's legal

position, the article notes that withholding water flows or suspending hydrological data sharing violates international law and undermines one of the world's most durable water-sharing agreements.

The report specifically flags India's Dulhasti Stage-II hydro-power project as a move that raises serious treaty concerns.

The project is a planned 260-megawatt run-of-the-river hydropower expansion on the Chenab River in the

Kishtwar district of Indian-occupied Jammu and Kashmir. It is designed as an extension of the existing 390-MW Dulhasti Stage-I project, which has been operational since 2007.

According to available details, Dulhasti Stage-II involves diverting Chenab waters through tunnels to an underground powerhouse downstream, allowing India to extract additional energy from the river.

The National Interest warns

that such projects, if pursued without full treaty compliance and transparency, risk altering flow patterns and eroding Pakistan's guaranteed water rights under the Indus Waters Treaty.

The magazine also criticises India's reported suspension of hydrological data sharing with Pakistan, calling it a breach of established international norms. It cautions that water scarcity, if politicised, could escalate into a major humanitarian threat across South Asia.

Latest US weapons to bolster capacity of Pakistan's security agencies: Naqvi

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Syed Mohsin Naqvi on Saturday welcomed the US assistance for bolstering the capacity buildign of Pakistan's law-enforcement agencies (LEAs), and said the identification of the people involved in crimes in foreign countries would be done with the help of a latest software.

He was speaking to Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM) at the US Embassy in Islamabad Natalie Baker who called on him

in Islamabad along with a delegation for a detailed meeting.

Naqvi informed the delegation that the NCCIA was carrying out a crackdown on illegal call centres across the country.

Both agreed to increase cooperation between Pakistan and the USA for security and border management.

Pakistan-US relations and the matters related to increasing cooperation between the two countries in sectors of common interests also came under discussion at the meeting.

Naqvi and Natalie agreed that there should be improved coordination between the two countries for enhancing cooperation at all levels.

Speaking on the occasion, Natalie said that the US would continue to take steps for increasing bilateral cooperation with Pakistan.

Minister of State for Interior Talal Chaudhry, secretary interior, additional secretary interior, DG FIA, Commandant Frontier Constabulary, DG National Cyber Crimes Investigation Agency, DG



Passport and Immigration, IGP Islamabad and other senior officials were also present on the occasion.

DG ISPR holds session with Islamia University students, teachers

News Desk

BAHAWALPUR: Director General (DG) Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) Lieutenant General Ahmad Sharif Chaudhry held a special session with teachers and students of various madrassas and educational institutions including Islamia University of Bahawalpur.

The DG ISPR paid tribute to the people of Bahawalpur for their services in the Pakistan Movement and the stability of

Pakistan.

The ceremony discussed in detail the national and regional situation, Operation Banyan Al-Marsus and the role of the Pakistan Army in national security.

The session discussed the Indian nexus of Fitna al-Hindustan and Fitna al-Khwarj and social media propaganda.

The Vice Chancellor of Islamia University appreciated the detailed awareness on the meanings and objectives of Pakistan's

national security.

The participants considered media literacy to be very important for protecting the consciousness and opinion of the youth.

Participants said media literacy is an effective means of protection from negative propaganda and enemy narrative.

Participants paid tribute to the army for standing with the nation in every difficulty.

Students of madrassas said that the Pakistan Army has always held the state and the constitu-



tion proudly high. At the end of the ceremony, students raised slogans of Pak Army and Pakistan Zindabad.

DPM Dar and EU Representative discuss bilateral cooperation

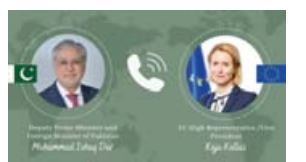
City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar held a telephone conversation with the EU High Representative and Vice President Kaja Kallas.

Both leaders discussed ways to further deepen bilateral cooperation. They also exchanged views on the recent regional and international

developments, including situation in Iran.

Deputy Prime Minister reaffirmed the importance of sustained dialogue and engagement between the two sides.



DPM/FM Dar, Iranian FM discuss current situation

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar spoke with Iran's Foreign Minister Seyed Abbas Araghchi and discussed the current situation in Iran and the wider region.

The DPM/FM expressed the hope for peace and stability and both sides agreed to

continue bilateral consultations on matters of mutual interest, the Foreign Office spokesperson said in a press release on Saturday.



Pakistan condemns profiling of mosques and religious leaders in IIOJK

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: A Foreign Office spokesperson stated that this intrusive measure constitutes a severe violation of the fundamental right to freedom of religion and belief.

The spokesperson described these actions as a coercive attempt to intimidate and marginalise the Muslim population in the occupied territory, calling it a clear infringement on their religious freedoms.

According to a statement, the forcible collection of personal details, photographs, and sectarian affiliations of religious leaders amounts to systematic harassment, intended to instil fear among worshippers and obstruct their ability to freely practice their faith.

The Foreign Office further

noted that these actions were part of a broader pattern of institutionalised Islamophobia, driven by the Hindutva ideology of the occupying Indian government.

The selective targeting of mosques and Muslim religious leaders, the statement added, highlights the discriminatory and communal nature of the policies being implemented.

Pakistan reiterated that the people of Jammu and Kashmir have an inherent right to practice their religion without fear, coercion, or discrimination.

The Foreign Office spokesperson affirmed Pakistan's unwavering solidarity with the people of Kashmir and vowed to continue raising its voice against all forms of religious persecution and intolerance directed at Kashmiris.

AJK PM orders immediate replacement of fallen Sardar Sikandar Hayat gate signboard

Abdul Majeed Tahir

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister of Azad Kashmir, Faisal Mumtaz Rathore, has taken notice of a news item that went viral on social media regarding the removal of the signboard of the gate named after former President of the State and former Prime Minister, Sardar Sikandar Hayat (late). In this regard, a report was sought from the district administration.

According to the report submitted by the district administration and the Mayor of Kotli, the signboard of the gate named after Sardar Sikandar Hayat (late) had fallen and broken last April due to heavy rain and strong winds. A new board was installed about fifty feet away on the directions of the Local Government Board, on which a welcome banner was placed in



connection with the proposed visit of the Prime Minister of Azad Kashmir. The report clarified that the news about removing the banner bearing the name of Sardar Sikandar Hayat (late) was contrary to facts.

Upon this, the Prime Minister of Azad Kashmir, Faisal Mumtaz Rathore, directed the district administration to immediately install a new banner bearing the name of Sardar Sikandar Hayat (late) on the gate named after him.

He said that Sardar Sikandar Hayat (late) was a national leader, and the region and the government fully acknowledge and appreciate his services. He further stated that politics should be avoided in the name of such leaders who have passed away, and their respect and dignity must always be upheld.

CM Sarfraz Bugti expresses grief over Makran Coastal Highway accident

QUETTA: Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti has expressed deep sorrow and grief over a tragic traffic accident involving a passenger bus on the Makran Coastal Highway.

In a statement issued here on Saturday, the Chief Minister said he was profoundly saddened by the loss of precious human lives. He extended heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families and prayed for the speedy recovery of those injured.

Sarfraz Bugti directed the Deputy Commissioner of Gwadar to ensure immediate and proper medical care for all injured passengers, stressing that no negligence would be tolerated. He also ordered ambulance services to transport the bodies of the deceased to their respective hometowns with dignity. Expressing solidarity with the affected families, the Chief Minister assured them of the provincial government's full support during this difficult time.

He has sought a detailed report on the accident and ordered a formal inquiry to determine its causes. Relevant authorities have been instructed to identify any lapses and take necessary measures to prevent such tragedies in the future.

Muslim Conference leaders hail party's ideological core ahead of key workers' convention

Bureau Report

MUZAFFARABAD: Senior leader of All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference Shaikh Maqsood Ahmed Khan Seyad Tasawer Naqvi Ms Memoona Kiyani and Ghulam Mohi-ud-Din Qureshi, a close associate of Mujahid-e-Awwal, the late Sardar Abdul Qayyum Khan, said that the All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference is the only truly ideological party that has made unparalleled sacrifices for the identity of the State of Jammu and Kashmir, the ideology of accession to Pakistan, and the construction and development of the state.

He said that the Workers' Convention to be held in Muzaffarabad on January 19 will not only be an important milestone in the party's history but will also set a new intellectual and practical direction for the politics of Azad Kashmir. He added that the Muslim Conference was founded by Mujahid-e-Awwal Sardar Abdul Qayyum Khan (late) on the basis of a clear ideology, strong character, and a spirit of public service. The party has always stood not for power, but for principles, ideology, and the rights of the people.

AJK Election Commission kicks off 2026 general election preparations with voter registration drive

Bureau Report

MUZAFFARABAD: The Election Commission of Azad Jammu and Kashmir has practically launched preparations for the upcoming General Elections 2026 by initiating the voter registration process across the state. In this regard, a formal schedule has been issued for mobile vans to facilitate village-to-village voter registration, ensuring access to both urban and rural areas. Through these mobile units, new voters will be registered, existing votes will be verified, and electoral rolls will be corrected and updated.

According to the Election Commission, the objective of this initiative is to ensure that no eligible citizen is deprived of their right to vote and that the electoral lists remain transparent, authentic, and in line with ground realities. The mobile vans will also reach remote, mountainous, and underdeveloped areas so that people can avail registration facilities at their doorstep.

Public circles have demanded that the Chief Election Commissioner be appointed immediately so that complete confidence in the electoral process can be restored and all kinds of rumors and uncertainties can be put to an end. It is noteworthy that in Azad Jammu and Kashmir, transparent, timely, and impartial elections are considered a guarantee of democratic continuity, and the recent activities of the Election Commission are being termed an important step in this direction.

Leading educational network launches principal conference series in Faisalabad

Abdul Majid

FAISALABAD: Under the banner of the largest educational network in Pakistan, the very first chapter of the series of Principals' Conference 2026 entitled, 'I am the principal: In the Era of Emerging Trends' was held at Serena Hotel, Civil Lines, Faisalabad.

The ceremony was glorified due to the talks shared by the Keynote Speaker of the event who was Prof. Rao Muhammad Iqbal. The Project Director of Allied Schools and EFA Schools, Dr. Shahid Mahmood shared his insights of EduRefined and the conference speakers shared their valuable thoughts on the areas of Academic Quality and Standards, Teachers' Capacity Building to Meet the Forthcoming Needs, Education and Technology Blend, ARVO Meets Curriculum Forthcoming Challenges, and Data Speaks Truth: Reflection through System Implementation. The conference was attended by the principals of Allied Schools, EFA School System and STEP Schools.

Daily routine

RAWALPINDI: A view of the massive traffic jam at Murree road as such congestion is a daily routine nowadays due to the increasing population and violation of traffic rules in City.



Photo: Online

Kotli PPP gears up for grand welcome to AJK Prime Minister Rathore

Bureau Report

KOTLI: In connection with the visit of Prime Minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Raja Faisal Mumtaz Rathore, to Kotli, an important meeting of Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) workers was held under the chairmanship of Azad Kashmir's Minister for Food, Javed Iqbal Budhanvi.

It was unanimously decided in the meeting that the Prime Minister of Azad Kashmir would be given a grand and enthusiastic welcome and a historic public



gathering would be organized to make the event memorable. The participants said that there is great enthusiasm and excitement among PPP

workers regarding the Prime Minister's visit to Kotli. From Holar to Kotli, he will be warmly received at various points, and arrangements will

be made to ensure a remarkable and historic reception. Javed Iqbal Budhanvi stated that several committees have been formed for this

purpose, and each committee is performing its assigned duties efficiently. He added that during his visit to Kotli, the Prime Minister of Azad Kashmir will announce several mega projects for the people of Kotli, which will directly benefit the general public.

He further said that whenever the PPP government has come into power, it has carried out development and welfare projects without discrimination, and it will continue to do so in the future as well.

India misuses counterterrorism laws to criminalise peaceful political dissent in occupied Jammu and Kashmir

Widely regarded as a fabricated and politically motivated case of Kashmiri women leader Asiya Andrabi, and Fahmeeda Sofi, and Nahida Nasreen by an NIA Court in Delhi India illustrates how counterterrorism laws are being misused to criminalise peaceful political dissent in occupied Jammu and Kashmir. Rather than addressing the state's repressive policies, the conviction is designed to silence voices advocating a political resolution of the UN-recognized Kashmir dispute.

The use of Indian law- the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) in this case raises serious concerns under international human rights law. The law's vague definitions of "unlawful" and "terrorist" activities violate the principle of legality enshrined in Article 15 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which requires criminal laws to be precise and foreseeable.

India is a State Party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which guarantees freedom of expression under Article 19(2). This right includes the freedom to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas of all kinds, including political ideas that may be controversial, unpopular, or offensive to the State. While Article 19(3) permits restrictions in the interests of national security, public order, or territorial integrity, such restrictions must satisfy the cumulative tests of legality, legitimate aim, necessity, and proportionality.

The UN Human Rights Committee, in its General Comment No. 34, has emphasized that restrictions on freedom of expression must not be overbroad and cannot be justified merely by reference to national security. The Committee has clarified that advocacy of political ideas, including those calling for autonomy or constitutional change, does not automatically constitute a threat to national security unless it is directly linked to

incitement of imminent violence.

International law draws a crucial distinction between the advocacy of ideas and incitement to violence. Article 20(2) of the ICCPR requires States to prohibit only such advocacy that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility, or violence. Criminal sanctions are therefore permissible only when speech is intended to incite violence and is likely to produce such violence. Equating ideological or political advocacy with insurrection without demonstrating this threshold risks violating international free speech standards.

Although the International Court of Justice does not adjudicate individual freedom of expression claims, its jurisprudence on self-determination is instructive. In cases such as the

Namibia Advisory Opinion and East Timor (Portugal v. Australia), the ICJ recognized the legitimacy of political aspirations related to self-determination. Advocacy for self-determination, even when it challenges existing territorial arrangements, cannot be delegitimized per se under international law.

Comparative international jurisprudence further supports this approach. The European Court of Human Rights (UDHR). Prolonged pre-trial detention, limited access to legal counsel, reliance on secret or circumstantial evidence, and the conduct of proceedings far from the accused's home region undermine the principles of natural justice. The right to a fair and public hearing by a competent, independent, and impartial tribunal was effectively denied, eroding the presumption of innocence.

The treatment of the accused women also raises concerns under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms

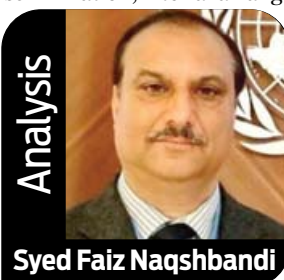
of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), which obligates states to ensure women's equal access to justice and protection from gender-based political persecution. Targeting women political leaders for their beliefs not only suppresses dissent but also reinforces structural discrimination against women in public life.

Furthermore, the case runs contrary to repeated UN Human Rights Council and UN Special Rapporteur observations that India's counterterrorism framework, particularly the UAPA, is incompatible with international human rights standards.

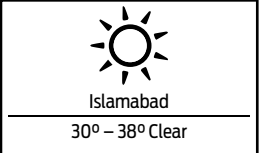
Counterterrorism measures, under international law, must be necessary, proportionate, and non-discriminatory criteria clearly unmet in this case.

Counterterrorism measures, under international law, must be necessary, proportionate, and non-discriminatory criteria clearly unmet in this case.

The author is the leader of All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) and legal expert of international law. He can be reached at faiz.naqshbandi@gmail.com



Syed Faiz Naqshbandi



SERVICES

Namaz Timings

Fajr 5:45 am
Zohr 12:18 pm
Asr 3:46 pm
Maghrib 5:24 pm
Isha 6:51 pm

EMERGENCY

Rescue (Police) 15
Bomb Disposal 15
Fire Services Rawalpindi/
Islamabad 1122 & 16
Emergency Ambulance 1122 &
& Rescue Services 4451122
Motorway Police 9266044
Motorway Police 9270601-20

Women Police Stations

Islamabad 9222596
Rawalpindi 9270601-20

ENQUIRY

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

HOSPITALS

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

DEPARTMENTS

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

PESCO Staff Assaulted During Anti-Power Theft Operation in D. I. Khan, One Injured

Bureau Report

DERA ISMAIL KHAN: Cantonment Police have registered a case against a man for allegedly assaulting PESCO staff during an operation against illegal electricity connections in the limits of Cantt Police Station.

According to details, during an ongoing crackdown against power theft, the line staff of PESCO Mandhran Sub-Division removed a direct illegal electricity connection (kunda) from the house of Ramzan son of Khadim Hussain in Shahjahan Shaheed Town. Upon this, the accused allegedly forcibly snatched the illegal wire from the PESCO staff, used harsh language, and engaged in a scuffle with them.

During the altercation, PESCO Assistant Lineman Jamshed sustained injuries and was immediately shifted to the Civil Hospital for medical treatment.

Cantt Police registered an FIR against the accused on the complaint of SDO Mandhran Sub-Division Engineer Irfanullah Khan.

Following the incident, SE PESCO Engineer Hizbullah Mehsud, XEN PESCO Rural Division Engineer Moaz Ahmed, and SDO PESCO Mandhran Sub-Division Engineer Irfanullah Khan visited the injured official at the hospital and assured him of full support.

Experts warn against elite capture for unchecked development declining Islamabad's green

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: The concerned citizens and experts speaking at a webinar raised their apprehensions on the growing environmental crisis in Islamabad caused by rapid, unplanned, and largely irreversible urban development by the Capital Development Authority (CDA) and different housing societies in violation of zoning rules and regulations.

Speakers stressed that the city's green spaces are steadily being replaced by concrete due to weak governance, elite capture, and a persistent conflict between populist decision-making and professional, science-based planning.

Well-known environment expert Dr. Tariq Banuri, highlighted that environmental protection efforts are further undermined by institutional weaknesses and the marginalization

and at times harassment of environmental professionals and activists working to safeguard natural areas such as protected hills, forests, and wildlife habitats.

Devcom-Pakistan Executive Director Munir Ahmed said: Islamabad is witnessing an alarming and distressing wave of tree cutting that threatens the very identity of the capital as a green and livable city. "The unchecked felling of trees in the name of development reflects a serious failure of planning and governance," said Munir Ahmed, expressing deep concern over the rapid loss of urban greenbelts, roadside trees, and natural green buffers.

Ashiq Ahmed Khan, Senator Mian Atti, Former Pak-EPA Director General Zia ul Islamabad and Dr. Zafar Mirza strongly condemned the ongoing tree-cutting in Islamabad, terming it a brutal act against nature



and a direct assault on public health and environmental sustainability.

Others who spoke on the occasion included Rabia Raheel, Ivan Carmody, Abdul Shakoor Sindhu, Almas Shakoor, and Silvia Shamon.

Enjoyment

ISLAMABAD: People are enjoying at Lake View Park in Federal Capital.



Photo: Online by Sultan Bashir

Jhatial Community Launches Free Ambulance Service Alongside Magazine Unveiling

Qayoom Surohi

HYDERABAD: Taking a significant step towards welfare activities, the All Pakistan Jhatial Ittehad has launched a free Jhatial Ambulance Service, while the Jhatial Magazine authored by Professor Madad Ali Jhatial was also unveiled. Speakers termed Professor Madad Ali Jhatial a benefactor of the community and stated that by writing a book on the history of the Jhatial community, he has rendered a great service.

These views were expressed at the unveiling ceremony of Jhatial Magazine by renowned Sindhi writer, columnist, and researcher Professor Madad Ali Jhatial, organized by the All Pakistan Jhatial Ittehad



at the Institute of Sindhology, Jamshoro. The ceremony was attended by Ghulam Abbas Jhatial, Nazia Masood Jhatial, Saima Wahid Kalhoro,

Engineer Nazir Jhatial, Dr. Abdul Hamid Jhatial, Haji Muhammad Shakir Jhatial, Master Qaiser Abbas, Wafa Maqbool, Khair Muhammad

Buriro, and other distinguished guests. Men and women of the Jhatial community from different parts of the country, including Punjab, also partic-

DFP denounces NIA Court conviction of Dukhtaran-e-Millat Chairperson

Abdul Majeed Tahir

SRINAGAR: The Jammu Kashmir Democratic Freedom Party (JKDFP) has strongly condemned the conviction of Dukhtaran-e-Millat Chairperson Aasiya Andrabi, along with Fahmeeda Sofi and Naheeda Nasreen, by an NIA court, calling it a mockery of justice and an alarming indictment of the so-called judicial process.

In a statement issued here today, the DFP spokesman advocate Arshad Iqbal said that the verdict was nothing short of judicial persecution, delivered after stripping the Kashmiri women prisoners of their basic legal rights and denying them any genuine opportunity to defend themselves.

"Such convictions, delivered without any semblance of due process, only reinforce the growing perception that the courts have been reduced to mere instruments of state coercion, cynically employed to criminalize political belief, crush dissent, and terrorize the people of Jammu and Kashmir into silence", the spokesman said.

He expressed deep concern that Kashmiri political prisoners have been booked on fabricated and politically motivated charges of sedition, terrorism, hate speech, and other accusations under the draconian Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act.

"These prisoners are being punished solely for expressing their political beliefs and for raising their voices against the injustices inflicted upon the people of Kashmir", he added.

He appealed to the international humanitarian organisations to raise their voice against these wrongful convictions and harsh sentencing of Kashmiri leaders on fabricated and politically motivated charges.

CEO CBD Punjab Reviews Ongoing Development Projects

Bureau Report

LAHORE: Chief Executive Officer of CBD Punjab, Imran Amin, conducted a detailed visit to ongoing development projects of CBD Punjab, where he reviewed the progress, construction pace, and quality of work.



During the visit, Executive Director Technical Riaz Hussain, Director Construction Asif Babar, Director Project Management Asif Iqbal, Director Engineering Umar Hayat, Project Manager NSIT Yasir Saifullah, along with representatives of project contractors and Neapak were present and provided comprehensive briefings on various components of the projects.

The CEO CBD Punjab Imran Amin was briefed on the development work at CBD Walk, where excavation and foundation works have been completed, followed by the completion of raft foundations for all 32 units. Shuttering for the retaining wall has been finalized, while concrete pouring is currently in progress.

Speaking on the occasion, CEO CBD Punjab Imran Amin said, "That all projects are progressing under transparent planning and strict compliance of high quality standards. We are committed to giving high end infrastructure to Punjab for modern urban development leading towards economic development".

Later, the CEO CBD Punjab Imran Amin, also visited CBD NSIT City, where he inspected the ongoing asphalt works. He directed the concerned officers and contractors to ensure that there is no compromise on construction quality, work pace, and safety standards at any stage.

CBD Punjab remains committed to transforming Punjab's urban landscape through timely, sustainable, and high-quality development projects aligned with international best practices.

Social Media Hype vs. Reality: Islamabad Airport Immigration Efficiency Questioned

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: A video circulating on social media platform X depicting passenger congestion at Islamabad International Airport has led to certain misconceptions regarding the efficiency and performance of FIA Immigration.

Islamabad International Airport handles approximately 10,000 international passengers daily through nearly 94 international flights. This substantial passenger volume places pressure on immigration counters and supporting infrastructure,

particularly during peak hours. Passenger congestion is often exacerbated by factors beyond immigration control, including weather-related delays, technical issues, and airline operational problems, which result in the clustering of flight arrivals. Such a situation was observed on 13 January 2026, when nearly 2,400 passengers were processed within a single hour, averaging about four passengers per minute per counter, reflecting the efficiency and professionalism of FIA Immigration staff under demanding conditions.

To ensure smooth operations,

FIA has implemented a three-shift system, deploying 15 immigration counters at departures and 13 counters at arrivals. FIA Immigration maintains close coordination with the Pakistan Airports Authority (PAA) through regular inter-agency meetings aimed at improving passenger facilitation and operational efficiency.

In continuation of these efforts, the Director General FIA, Mr. Riffat Mukhtar Raja, visited Islamabad International Airport on 16 January 2026 to personally review immigration operations and further strengthen inter-

agency collaboration. During the visit, several improvement measures were agreed upon, including the installation of a queue management system, phased deployment of e-gates, augmentation of FIA Immigration staff, launch of a pre-departure application for passengers, and deployment of dedicated queue management staff.

FIA remains fully committed to ensuring efficient, transparent, and passenger-friendly immigration services while continuously upgrading systems and coordination mechanisms to meet growing travel demands.



Group Chairman/Chief Editor: **Almass Ayoub Sabir**
 Vice Chairman: **Asim Nazir Ahmad**
 Editor: **Naveed Ahmad Khan**
 Head Editorial Advisory Board: **Amjad Mehmood**
 Bureau Chief Karachi: **Khurram Jaffrani**
 (jaffrani@adpluse.pk)
 Bureau Chief Lahore: **Syed Afraz Ali Nazish**
 (afrazalishah@gmail.com)
 Head Office: AIMS Building, Street No. 4, H-8/1, Islamabad.
 spokesmanislamabad@gmail.com
 Phone: +92 51 2227123,
 WhatsApp +92 346 5008408
 Karachi office: A111, Block C, Gulsha-e-Jamal, PRECHS,
 Karachi Phone: 021-33399390
 Email: spokesmankarachi@gmail.com
 Lahore Office: 7-E, Samanberg, Johar Town.
 spokesmanlahore@gmail.com
 Daily The Spokesman available only on annual subscription

China vs. America: Who Shapes the New World Order?

The return of Donald Trump to power in January 2024 did not mark a routine political shift inside the United States. It detonated a geopolitical shockwave that began tearing apart alliances built over nearly a century. What followed was not slow diplomatic drift, but the violent collision of political tectonic plates. Relationships forged in the ruins of two world wars—between the United States, Europe, and Canada—began cracking in real time, while new balances of power were built at a pace that stunned analysts and strategists alike.

For decades, Europe and North America were welded together by NATO, by trade integration, and by a shared narrative of democracy, human rights, and collective security. Canada stood as the most loyal extension of this Western framework. Its economy was fused with that of the United States through NAFTA and later the USMCA. Nearly three-quarters of Canadian exports flowed south. Energy, automobiles, agriculture, defense production, and technology supply chains functioned as one system. Canadian soldiers fought alongside American forces from Korea to Afghanistan. Ottawa followed Washington into wars it did not initiate. The assumption was simple: this alliance was permanent.

Europe moved in the same direction. While maintaining NATO ties, the EU

expanded high-level engagement with Beijing on climate finance, renewable energy, digital infrastructure, and industrial standards. European leaders did not frame this as ideological alignment, but as counterbalancing. If Washington was willing to use trade, security, and sovereignty as pressure tools, Europe would build parallel relationships to reduce its exposure.

This realignment was not driven by economics alone. It was shaped by Washington's expanding use of kinetic power abroad. Continued U.S. military support for Israel's campaign in Gaza, combined with repeated air operations in the Middle East and counterterrorism strikes across parts of Africa, reinforced a global image of a superpower defaulting to force rather than diplomacy. In the Western Hemisphere, sharp rhetoric and pressure tactics aimed at Venezuela, Cuba, and other Latin American governments revived long-standing fears of economic coercion and political intervention.

Against this backdrop, China's model appeared fundamentally different. Beijing did not offer military protection or ideological partnership. It offered roads, ports, railways, industrial parks, energy corridors, and financing. Through the Belt and Road Initiative, China poured hundreds of billions of dollars

into infrastructure across Asia, Africa, Latin America, and parts of Europe. In Central Asia, it built transit corridors linking east to west. In Africa, it constructed ports and industrial zones. In Latin America, it invested in logistics hubs and energy projects. In the Arctic, it established research stations, icebreaker missions, and scientific cooperation with Nordic partners.

This was influenced without occupation. Power without troops. Integration instead of intimidation. For Canada and Europe, this approach offered a strategic counterweight. Engagement with China became a way to balance Washington's dominance, not replace it entirely, but dilute its ability to dictate terms. Joint research initiatives, green technology partnerships, and trade expansion were not merely economic—they were geopolitical insurance policies.

This is the tectonic change now underway. Canada, once the most reliable extension of American economic and strategic space, is constructing parallel networks. Europe, once anchored unconditionally to Washington, is building its own security, industrial, and diplomatic architecture. The Global South, from Brazil to Central Asia, is expanding partnerships that bypass traditional Western

gatekeepers. The contrast between the two superpower strategies is stark. The United States increasingly relies on tariffs, sanctions, military deployment, and political pressure. China relies on infrastructure, investment, trade integration, and long-term development financing. One model seeks compliance. The other seeks dependence.

What makes this moment historically dangerous is the speed at which trust has collapsed. Alliances built over generations are being tested in a single political cycle. Strategic assumptions that once anchored global stability are being discarded in real time.

The tectonic plates of global order have shifted. The world is no longer organized around a single center of gravity. It is fragmenting into competing spheres of influence, overlapping partnerships, and strategic hedges.

Whether this leads to balance or breakdown will depend not on the ambitions of Washington or Beijing alone, but on how far Canada, Europe, and the rest of the world continue down the path of building a system designed not around loyalty—but around insulation from power itself.

The writer is Press Secretary to the President (Retd), Former Press Minister, Embassy of Pakistan to France, Former Press Attaché to Malaysia and Former MD, SRBC. He is living in Macomb, Michigan



Analysis

Qamar Bashir

Mobile banking tops 120m as digital finance mainstreams

Pakistan's digital finance sector is expanding faster than expected, with mobile banking accounts crossing the 120 million mark and app-based transactions emerging as the leading mode of digital payments.

The milestone marks a clear shift from early adoption to mainstream use, underscoring growing public confidence in digital financial services.

Yet as transaction volumes surge, experts caution that the real test of Pakistan's fintech momentum lies beyond user-friendly apps and sleek interfaces. The strain, they say, is increasingly borne by core banking platforms, integration layers, data pipelines, and the operational discipline required to keep systems accurate, secure, and continuously available.

The stakes are rising across the entire ecosystem. Pakistan's national payment infrastructure is expanding rapidly, amplifying the need for reliability. The Raast instant payment system has processed more than three billion transactions worth nearly Rs80 trillion since its launch, with dozens of financial institutions now integrated.

As payment rails scale, industry observers note that the readiness of banks' internal core systems will determine whether growth translates into seamless service or recurring consumer frustration.

Syed Mohammad Faisal, a fintech and digital transformation expert based in Riyadh with nearly two decades of experience managing high-volume core systems and data integration, believes the next phase of Pakistan's fintech growth will be decided by resilience engineering rather than cosmetic upgrades. "Digital trust is built in the back-end, not the front-end," he said. "If the core is slow, inconsistent, or frequently down, the best app in the world can't protect customer confidence."

Faisal describes resilience as a layered discipline rather than a single solution. He points to three critical checks for banks and regulated platforms: system capacity and performance during peak loads; real-time data freshness to prevent mismatched balances or delayed updates; and continuity planning that allows clean and rapid switchover to disaster recovery systems without prolonged instability. One of the most common hidden risks, he argues, is integration sprawl.

As banks add digital channels, wallets, scoring engines, and third-party services, the number of system hand-offs multiplies, each one a potential failure point. "There's a difference between building a feature and building a service,"

Industry experts stress that resilience must be treated as a governance priority, not merely an IT concern. This includes robust change management, clear incident-response protocols, vendor accountability, and enforceable service-level agreements for all critical dependencies.

Faisal argues that resilience should be measured like a business KPI, backed by regular disaster recovery drills, real-time replication readiness, and continuous system observability.

As Pakistan's fintech push accelerates and consumer expectations rise, analysts say the next chapter of digital banking will be written quietly, behind the screens. It will depend less on flashy app launches and more on the unseen engineering that ensures every transaction remains accurate, timely, and dependable, even when millions of users are moving money at the same time.



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

AJK's Elections: A Test of Democratic Credibility and National Responsibility

The international system is passing through a period of pronounced instability marked by geopolitical realignments, regional conflicts and diplomatic uncertainty. From Eastern Europe to the Middle East and from Gaza to Ukraine, long-standing assumptions are being challenged. Much of this volatility is rooted in the erosion of multilateral norms over recent years, particularly during the Trump era, when erratic policymaking weakened institutional predictability and emboldened unilateral behaviour. In such an environment, politically sensitive regions are assessed not only through security lenses but also through the strength of their democratic and constitutional frameworks.

From the perspective of Pakistan's federal government and state institutions, political ambiguity in Azad Kashmir is not a marginal concern. Azad Kashmir occupies a central position in Pakistan's constitutional narrative, security architecture and international stance on the Kashmir dispute. Any weakening of democratic norms in the region risks undermining Pakistan's moral authority at global forums and complicating its diplomatic posture.

In contrast to the prevailing inertia, Pakistan Muslim League (N) Azad Kashmir has demonstrated visible organisational preparedness. For the first time in the region's political history, party tickets were sought through a structured application process, accompanied by a substantial fee. The response—more than 200 applicants—signals both political confidence and readiness for electoral competition. The party leadership's active engagement

further reinforces the perception of preparedness, irrespective of partisan preferences.

Another dimension affecting the political climate is the ongoing deadlock between the Azad Kashmir government and the Joint Awami Action Committee. The Committee emerged as a genuine reflection of public frustration over economic pressures and governance shortcomings. To its credit, the federal government responded constructively—providing subsidies, engaging in dialogue and implementing relief measures during the protest movements of September and October.

The Sehat Card initiative exemplifies this commitment. Initially dependent on budgetary contributions from the Azad Kashmir government, the scheme was ultimately financed by the federal government by extending it to Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan alongside the Islamabad Capital Territory. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif deserves acknowledgment for ensuring this relief despite IMF-related fiscal constraints and broader economic challenges.

However, the ongoing impasse over the Action Committee's demand regarding migrant seats illustrates the limits of confrontation-driven politics. While the federal government proposed the formation of a committee to examine the issue, progress has been hindered in part by the Action Committee's rigid stance. Democratic advocacy must be complemented by institutional engagement. At this stage, continued inflexibility risks creating a damaging perception—that both the government and protest leadership are, intentionally or otherwise, contributing to condi-

tions that enable electoral delay.

Such perceptions resonate strongly among Azad Kashmir's intelligentsia—academics, journalists, lawyers and policy observers—who understand that democratic continuity is not optional. Delayed elections weaken institutions, deepen political polarisation and invite speculation regarding non-democratic interventions. For a region of such strategic sensitivity, this is a risk Pakistan cannot afford.

Timely elections, therefore, are not merely a political demand; they are a constitutional requirement and a national responsibility. Any deviation undermines democratic credibility and complicates Pakistan's broader Kashmir narrative.

Azad Jammu and Kashmir is not simply a territory of five million people. It is a strategic buffer, a political symbol and an ideological extension of Pakistan. Stability in South Asia is inseparable from democratic stability in this region. Attempts—overt or covert—to delay elections or weaken democratic processes directly undermine Pakistan's long-term strategic interests.

The path forward is clear. The Prime Minister of Azad Kashmir must immediately forward the panel for the appointment of the Chief Election Commissioner to the Prime Minister of Pakistan to enable swift constitutional action. Simultaneously, meaningful engagement with the Joint Awami Action Committee must replace rigidity and confrontation. The Committee's leadership, too, must recognise that while public trust remains its greatest strength, any association with election delays could seriously damage its credibility.

For Pakistan's government, its institutions and the people of Azad Kashmir alike, the conclusion is inescapable: democratic continuity in Azad Kashmir is not negotiable—it is a shared national obligation.



Analysis

Sardar Abdul Khaliq Wasi

Inching Towards Armageddon

Chaudhary Muhammad Faraz

The world is changing, there are clear signs and signals of the new world order setting in, countries in different regions are conspicuously realigning, strengthening and getting into defense deals, agreements and pacts with traditional or new powers. The US dominated system is being replaced by a multipolar one. Characterized by a great power competition, rising regional or mid powers with shifting alliances and changing technical and economic dynamics which also include the advent and reliance on AI (Artificial Intelligence) and new regional supply chains, challenging and replacing the existing ones. This change was gradual and consistent, which has reshaped the world's preferences thus creating higher uncertainty and possibilities for both deeper collaborations and greater conflicts.

Iran must be neutralized as per the US present policy and that is why there is chaos in the country, riots have erupted in almost 100 cities of Iran, all supported by the US. The country was practically infested with Indian and Israeli spies targeting the top Iranian Leadership almost at will. It is pertinent to mention here the recent Indo-Pak Standoff and India's Crushing defeat by the Pakistan in a 4 day engagement in May 2025 which gave Pakistan a chance to identify the Indo-Israeli spy news in Iran and KSA, after which both the countries realized the game being played in the region unearthing and then eradicating the RAW and Mossad networks from their countries. That is how the Indian Raw's role was exposed, which was working in Iran and KSA on the behest of Israel's Mossad. It seems like the Government in Iran would fall to the typical tactics of a Power like the USA supported by Israel in making the regime change happen. The only problem that the US and Israel are facing is that the Iranian population may be against the present Iranian regime but they still do not support any entity

backed by US or Israel as there is enough hatred and resentment among the Iranian masses for President Trump and Israel. So Raza Shah Pahlavi's chances of coming back to power seem slim, however, someone covertly supported by the US may take over power in Iran but that needs to be seen. Presently the US is considering attack options on Iran and in return Iran has threatened the US of attacking its sites in close proximity.

If this present regime in Iran falls, which seems likely, then it would create serious problems for Pakistan, exposing us to threats and hostility from 3 sides i.e.; India, Afghanistan and Iran. After Markka-e-Haq, Pakistan also emerged as a mid-Power in the region by impressively and decisively neutralizing India, which was USA's and western nation's safe bet to neutralize China. With Indian failure even to match the military potential of a much smaller Pakistan, serious questions arose on this bet the West, Israel the US placed an India, as it was proven that the Indians are nowhere near the Chinese military might and superior capability.

Presently, the Indians are being punished by their partners for letting them and their hopes down. Pakistan must consider this fact that the acknowledgement and praise from the world is for the victor who thrashed a ten time bigger rival supported by Israel, USA and rest of the western block, not for a Muslim Nation with nuclear capability which has established itself as a mid-level power in the region with Chinese support.

Besides, the US has made it clear that the support for Pakistan in 2026 depends upon its policies and behavior. USA's stance is clear, it will only look for its own interests and those of Israel's. It will go for resources especially oil and rare earth minerals, no matter where they are in the world. The US will keep countering China and Russia to make the world believe that (Unipolarity Still exists) and the USA is the Sole SuperPower.

China, Russia and Europe will also safeguard their interests in their respective regions and the world at large, it can be predicted that the world is inching towards a major Global Conflict which may convert into a third world war or an Armageddon.

New Performance Metrics for Ambassadors: From Political Talk to Concrete Trade Deals

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: On January 15, an expanded meeting was chaired by President Shavkat Mirziyoyev on the activities of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and diplomatic missions abroad.

Opening the session, the Head of our state noted that the meeting is taking place amid sharp geopolitical changes in the world and increasing threats to the sovereignty of states. In this regard, the need to critically assess current foreign policy activities and move to a renewed format for organizing the work of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and foreign diplomatic missions was emphasized.

The President noted that 2025 had been a productive year for the country's foreign policy. During the year, high-level visits were made to 26 foreign countries, and for the first time in recent history, visits to Uzbekistan were organized by the leaders of a number of countries. Multilateral dialogues in the "Central Asia Plus" format became productive. In recent years, strategic partnerships have been established with 11 countries, bringing the total number to 19, and allied relations have been built with Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, and Tajikistan.

As a result of an open, pragmatic, thoughtful and proactive foreign policy, Uzbekistan is consistently strengthening its position as one of the global centres of peace and diplomacy, emphasized the President.

Since 2017, 16 new diplomatic missions and consulates have been opened abroad, bringing their total number to 60, and the number of countries with which diplomatic relations have been established to 165. There has also been an increase in the number of staff and salaries of employees of embassies, consular offices, representative offices to international organizations, and employees of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

At the same time, a fundamental question was raised as to whether all diplomatic missions are making full use of the opportunities provided.

In the current environment, an ambassador is not just a person who conducts political dialogue. An ambassador



is a state representative who attracts investment and technologies, opens new export markets, launches transport and logistics corridors, increases tourist flows, creates conditions for legal labor migration and, most importantly, protects the rights of our citizens, emphasized the President.

In this regard, it was noted that key performance indicators for ambassadors should include the volume of export revenues from the countries of residence, growth in tourist flows, and the effectiveness of organizing legal labor migration.

Particular emphasis was placed on the need to increase exports and investments by strengthening economic diplomacy.

As part of bilateral and multilateral events in 2025, agreements were signed on investment projects and trade contracts totaling \$160 billion. For the first time in history, foreign trade turnover exceeded \$80 billion, exports reached \$33.5 billion, and foreign investment exceeded \$43 billion. Exports to 75 countries increased by almost \$4.5 billion.

In view of this, the ambassadors have been tasked with expanding export deliveries to the Middle East, Europe, Asia, and Africa, as well as implementing specific projects in the fields of industry, agriculture, the chemical industry, the textile industry, greenhouse farming, and the service sector. At the same time, it was noted that Uzbekistan's products remain insufficiently recognized in certain markets.

It was noted that the growth of logistics costs has a negative impact on the competitiveness of domestic products. In this regard, the need to diversify transit routes, optimize logistics chains, and develop additional proposals to reduce transportation costs when entering European markets was indicated.

In the agricultural sector, tasks have been set for researching and implementing water-saving technologies, modern agricultural technologies, and innovative greenhouse solutions. Along with this, measures have been outlined to expand export markets for chemical industry products, bring domestic manufacturers up to international standards



and requirements, and organize specialized exhibitions and presentations.

The need to intensify trade and economic cooperation with the African continent as one of the promising new export destinations has been emphasized. To this end, a clear roadmap is to be developed with the participation of relevant ministries and foreign diplomatic missions.

It was noted that ambassadors should be directly interested in finding promising projects, attracting them, and implementing them in practice. In this regard, it was decided to introduce financial incentives for ambassadors who bring specific investment or export projects to a logical conclusion.

Criticism was levelled at the insufficient realization of existing potential in a number of areas. In particular, it was noted that opportunities to attract international grants are not being fully exploited. It was noted that with closer and more systematic interaction between ministries, industry leaders, and ambassadors, it would have been possible to attract an additional \$200-300 million in grant funds last year.

As noted, international

organizations and donor countries announce grant programs worth approximately \$200 billion annually. In this regard, the task has been set to implement a unified, systematic, and effective approach to working with grants.

In addition, the need to take concrete measures, together with the ambassadors to the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, Switzerland, China, Japan, and Singapore, to attract leading foreign universities ranked in the top 100 worldwide as partners of Uzbek higher education institutions was emphasized.

It was noted that cooperation between regions and diplomatic missions in expanding foreign economic relations is still insufficient. The need for active participation of regional governors, together with ambassadors, in the systematic promotion of export-oriented products of the regions and in facilitating the entry of local enterprises into foreign markets was emphasized.

Providing Uzbek citizens with legal and high-paying jobs abroad was identified as another priority area. The expansion of the geography of organized labor migration was noted, while it was

pointed out that in a number of countries, work in this area is not sufficiently effective, and relevant instructions were given in this regard.

It was emphasized that embassies and consulates should actively protect the rights and legitimate interests of citizens and provide qualified legal assistance in each specific case. The task has been set to abandon "office diplomacy", strengthen work in the field, and establish direct dialogue with compatriots.

In the field of tourism, the need to further strengthen the role of ambassadors, introduce new approaches to promoting the country's tourism and cultural potential, make effective use of visa-free regimes, and attract international outsourcing companies has been identified.

Issues related to expanding foreign policy ties, high-quality and timely preparation of high-level visits, retraining of diplomatic personnel, and the formation of a reserve of promising specialists were also discussed.

The intensification of foreign information policy and the improvement of the country's international image through systematic work with foreign

media and the implementation of special media projects were identified as priority tasks.

The need to update the Concept of foreign policy of the Republic of Uzbekistan, review its priority areas, and define clear tasks for protecting national interests and strengthening the country's position in the international arena was emphasized.

As the President noted, the new concept should comprehensively reflect long-term strategic goals, the logic of internal reforms, as well as national interests in the areas of economic diplomacy, security, investment, exports, transport and logistics, water and climate issues.

In order to give proper recognition to the achievements of diplomats, it was proposed to establish the honorary title of "Honored Diplomat of the Republic of Uzbekistan".

At the end of the meeting, President Shavkat Mirziyoyev emphasized: "The time has come for a new generation of diplomats - those who achieve concrete results and firmly defend the interests of Uzbekistan in the international arena".

In the course of the session, reports and proposals of our ambassadors abroad were heard.

IT Minister Inaugurates ITCN Asia 2026

Tahir Amin Malik

LAHORE: Federal Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication, Shaza Fatima Khawaja, today inaugurated ITCN Asia 2026 at the Lahore Expo Centre, highlighting the government's continued focus on expanding IT exports, advancing next-generation connectivity, and positioning Pakistan as a competitive player in the global digital economy.

Speaking at the opening, the Minister noted that Pakistan's technology sector was gaining growing international recogni-

tion for its resilience, with global technology rankings steadily improving under the government's Digital Pakistan initiative. She emphasized that enabling policies and reforms were central to this progress and acknowledged the pivotal role of the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) in improving the ease of doing business and attracting both local and foreign investment into the technology sector.

A key highlight of ITCN Asia 2026 was the Global CISO Summit, which reinforced its position as a cornerstone of Paki-

stan's cybersecurity ecosystem and a leading platform for advancing digital resilience and international collaboration. With participation from over 50 countries, the summit once again served as a global forum for cybersecurity thought leadership. The summit was led in Lahore by Dr Erdal Ozkaya, President of the Global CISO Forum, who travelled from the United States under his global patronage, along with Advisor Syed Abdul Qadir. The forum convened over 500 senior technology and cybersecurity leaders, including CISOs, CxOs, policy-makers, solution providers, and

more than 100 overseas Pakistani executives, successfully bridging international best practices with local expertise and strengthening Pakistan's standing in the global cybersecurity community.

Addressing the opening ceremony, Umair Nizam, Group Director, Ecommerce Gateway Group, said that ITCN Asia had evolved far beyond a traditional exhibition to become a strategic national platform driving digital growth, investment, and international engagement. He added that the scale, diversity, and global participation at ITCN Asia reflected growing confidence in



Pakistan's technology sector and its long-term potential as a regional innovation hub.

Antibiotic Resistance in Pakistan: a Hidden Health Crisis we Can't Ignore

Maryam Abid

Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) is one of the major global public health concerns. It develops over time when bacteria, viruses, fungi, and parasites acquire multiple mechanisms (genetic changes) to protect themselves from the effects of antimicrobial drugs, which are used to treat infections. Research shows that bacterial AMR resulted in 1.29 million global deaths in 2019.

Antimicrobial resistance is a complex biological phenomenon driven by the misuse and overuse of antimicrobials in humans, which affects countries in all regions. AMR puts many benefits of modern medicine are under threat, as it makes infections difficult to treat and risks other medical procedures.

Antimicrobial resistance crisis in Pakistan: Pakistan is a developing SouthAsian country with a high burden of antibiotic resistance, associated with 200,000 annual

deaths. Since 1990, AMR has been responsible for 40,000 deaths each year in Pakistan and remains a leading cause of mortality, especially among the young. A Study by Qamar et al, reported the outbreak of extensively drug resistant salmonella in 2016, which shows 100% resistant to Fluoroquinolones. In 2021, AMR contributed to an estimated (31,000-48,300) deaths, and among 204 countries, Pakistan ranked 53rd in age-adjusted mortality rate linked to AMR. Research shows that bacteria resistant to multiple drugs across different antibiotic classes and to nearly all antibiotic classes have been detected in Pakistan over the last few years.

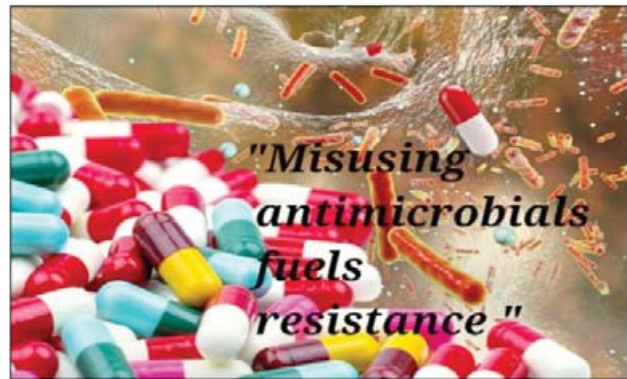
Key resistant pathogens in Pakistan Common pathogens linked to antibiotic resistance in Pakistan including, E.coli, Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA), Salmonella typhi, Klebsella pneumoniae, Pseudomonas aeruginosa, Shigella spp and Acinetobacter spp. These organisms are frequently resistant to

first-line drugs such, penicillin, ciprofloxacin, and tetracycline. The rise of carbapenem-resistant Enterobacteriaceae highlights the urgent need for coordinated national surveillance.

Current update (2025): The first nationally endorsed AMR priority pathogen list in the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region has been announced by the World Health Organization and the Pakistan National Institute of Health Sciences.

Key drivers of antimicrobial resistance in Pakistan: Antibiotic resistance in Pakistan has many causes. These include misuse & overuse of antibiotics (non-prescribed). Inadequate infection control measures, and limited public awareness, extensive usage in agriculture, self-medication and poverty also contribute to the issue. The overuse and misuse of antibiotics is escalating resistance, making this drug less effective at killing bacteria [WHO]. One major reason for AMR in Pakistan is the widespread self-prescription of antibiotics for common infection that cannot necessarily bacterial

or can be viral. Accurate detection of viral & bacterial infection generally requires culturing and sensitivity testing which is avoided due to inadequate facilities & time which leads to medicine misuse.



Impact of antimicrobial resistance on public health in Pakistan: The AMR crisis originates from common antibiotic misuse in humans and agriculture, and has an impact on public health in Pakistan. It makes it harder to treat infections, increases mortality rates in Pakistan

the One Health Trust, causes

prolonged hospitalization, rising healthcare costs, and fewer the treatment options. A study by Safdar et al in Pakistan reported that AMR infections impose a higher economic burden as patients experience longer

hospital stays, and higher medical expenses (pharmacy, Lab, transport, food) compared to treating precautionary infections. Precautions to prevent antimicrobial resistance in Pakistan Prevention of antimicrobial resistance in Pakistan demands coordinated action across multiple sectors (government,

healthcare professionals, and public and agriculture sectors). There are preventative measures against AMR for the general public and patients.

Use prescribed antimicrobials only: There is a need to avoid taking antibiotics for viral infections cold or flu, as they are not effective against viruses.

Take the full course of prescribed doses: Complete the full course of medication as prescribed by your doctor. Stopping medication early will give a chance to a some bacteria to survive and become resistant.

Practice good hygiene and infection prevention: One of the effective ways to prevent the spread of infections is frequent hand washing with soap, safe food handed and proper sanitation.

Ensure timely and complete vaccination: Vaccination is another step to prevent infection and these of antibiotics.

Increase public awareness: There is a need to educate the public or communities about the adverse effects of overuse and misuse of antibiotics.

Future risk of antimicrobial resistance in Pakistan:

Antibiotic resistance is a growing concern for the future, as it could cause 262,000 associated deaths by 2050 without urgent action and precautionary measures. If it remains unchecked, it will pose adverse outcomes in the future as common infections from wounds or pneumonia become deadly and might not respond to antibiotics. More healthcare costs, costly drugs, longer hospital stays, and economic burden will increase in the future.

Antimicrobial resistance is a growing threat in Pakistan and across the region. Healthcare systems and experts work to control antibiotic-resistant infections, but the fight doesn't stop there. We all have a role to play. Complete your prescribed antibiotics, avoid misuse and self-medication, and practice good hygiene. Small actions together can slow the rise of superbugs.

The writer is MS in Microbiology and Immunology from COMSATS University Islamabad.

Bull & Bears PSX 100-Share Index Fluctuation

Pakistan: PSX 100-Share Index	
Current	Prev. Close
185,098.83	181,456.33
Day's High	Day's Low
185,208.98	182,559.69
Index Value	Change
53,308,364,479	+3642.50
Percentage	Time
+2.01%	16 Jan, 2026 4:30 pm

Europe: FTSE 100 Index	
Index Value	Change
10,235.29	-3.65
Percentage	Time
-0.036%	16 Jan, 4:35 pm GMT

USA: Dow Jones Industrial Average	
Index Value	Change
49,415.78	-26.66
Percentage	Time
-0.054%	16 Jan, 12:24 pm GMT-5

Asia Pacific: Nikkei Stocks Average	
Index Value	Change
53,936.17	-174.33
Percentage	Time
-0.32%	16 Jan, 3:45 pm GMT+9

Open Market Forex Rates

Currency	Buying	Selling
Australian Dollar	186.5	190.5
Bahrain Dinar	744	754
Canadian Dollar	201	206
China Yuan	39.73	40.13
Danish Krone	43.27	43.67
Euro	325.5	329
Hong Kong Dollar	35.55	35.90
Indian Rupee	3.01	3.10
Japanese Yen	1.7575	1.8575
Kuwaiti Dinar	908	918
Malaysian Ringgit	68.55	69.15
New Zealand \$	158.95	160.95
Norwegians Krone	27.56	27.86
Omani Riyal	728.6	738.6
Qatari Riyal	76.26	76.96
Saudi Riyal	74.9	75.3
Singapore Dollar	216.5	221.5
Swedish Korona	30.16	30.46
Swiss Franc	347.74	350.49
Thai Bhat	8.74	8.89
U.A.E Dirham	76.6	77.2
UK Pound Sterling	375.5	379
US Dollar	280.65	282.75

Ali Pervaiz Malik highlights Pakistan's mineral potential at Future Minerals Forum, Riyadh

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Petroleum, Ali Pervaiz Malik, represented Pakistan at the Future Minerals Forum (FMF) in Riyadh where he participated in high-level discussions showcasing Pakistan's immense mineral potential to the world.

On the sidelines of FMF, the Federal Minister held a series of high-level bilateral meetings. These included a meeting with HRH Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman Al-Saud, Minister of Energy of Saudi Arabia, during which both sides discussed ways to strengthen bilateral cooperation across the energy sector, including petroleum supply, renewable energy, energy efficiency, investment opportunities.

Ali Pervaiz Malik also had a meeting with Engr. Khalid Al-Falih, Minister of Investment of Saudi Arabia, to discuss enhancing investment flows and facilitating partnerships in Pakistan's energy and minerals sectors. He also met with Mr. Jassim Alshi-



rawi, Secretary General, International Energy Forum, Mr. Sami Takaluoma, CEO, Metso Corporation, the Chairman of Delta Oil, Mr. Badr Al-Aiban, Eng. Saad Alkhalb, CEO, Saudi EXIM Bank. During these interactions, prospects of mutual cooperation came under discussion.

The Federal Minister took part in a prominent ministerial panel titled "Dawn of a Global Cause: The Role of Governments in Driving Mineral Supply," moderated by Ms. Eleni Giokos, Anchor and Correspondent, CNN. The panel featured distinguished speakers including Mr. Bandar Alkhorayef, Minister of Industry and Mineral Resources, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia; Ms. Leila Benali, Minister of Energy Transition and Sustainable Development, Morocco; Mr. Thiam Tidjani, Minister of Mines and Industry, Mauritania; Ms. Aurora Williams Baussa, Mining Minister, Chile; and Mr. Claude Guay, Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources, Canada.

Addressing on GFFA 2026

BERLIN: Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research, Rana Tanveer Hussain, addressing the Global Forum for Food and Agriculture (GFFA) 2026, highlighting Pakistan's commitment to water resilience, sustainable agriculture, and food security.



Photo: PID

Increasing levy is unjust; reduction in oil prices not passed on to consumers, Amaan Paracha

Commerce Desk

KARACHI: Vice President of the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI), Amaan Paracha, strongly criticized the government's decision to increase the petroleum levy on petrol and diesel, stating that on one hand the full benefit of the decline in global oil prices is not being passed on to consumers, while on the other hand higher taxes on petroleum products are subjecting the public to mental distress, as they are already burdened by inflation.

Amaan Paracha urged the government to transfer the benefit of reduced global oil prices to the domestic market in order to control inflation and lower the high



cost of doing business in the country. He said that the government increased the petroleum levy on petrol by Rs 4.65 per litre, raising it from Rs 79.62 to Rs 84.27 per litre. In addition, the levy on diesel was increased by 80 paise per litre, taking it from Rs 75.41 to Rs 76.21 per litre. He added that had the levy been kept unchanged, petrol could have become cheaper by about Rs 4.50 per litre.

Customs Enforcement Quetta Seizes Smuggled Goods and Narcotics Worth Rs. 515.30 Million



Commerce Desk

QUETTA: Customs Enforcement Quetta, in multiple successful intelligence-based operations (IBOs), conducted in coordination with law enforcement agencies, seized large consignments of smuggled goods and narcotics in the areas of Mastung and Manikhawa. The total tentative value of the seized items is estimated at Rs. 515.30 million.

estimated at Rs. 515.30 million.

The recovered consignments included foreign-origin narcotic hashish, China salt, cigarettes, and assorted electronic goods. The seizures were made on the basis of credible intelligence, reflecting the proactive enforcement strategy of Customs Enforcement Quetta.

These operations underscore the continued commitment of Pakistan

Customs to curb smuggling, combat illegal trade, and protect the national economy. The timely support and effective coordination of the law enforcement agencies of Balochistan played a crucial role in the successful execution of these operations.

The FBR has reiterated its firm resolve to curb smuggling, illegal trade and protect national revenue.

Agriculture in Syria... one of the strongest pillars of reconstruction

SANA

DAMASCUS: The agricultural sector, which for many years has been the backbone of the Syrian economy, stands out as one of the most resilient sectors, having survived the devastating effects of the war waged by the ousted regime against the Syrian people between 2011 and 2024.

While the industrial, tourism, and service sectors were severely impacted, agriculture continues to play a strategic role in the country's food security and economic recovery

by maintaining production, albeit on a limited scale and intermittently.

With its geography stretching from the humid Mediterranean plains to the semi-arid plateaus of the interior, Syria possesses a rare climatic diversity that defines its identity as an "agricultural country." The fertile valleys fed by the Euphrates and Tigris rivers, the grain basins of the Jazira region, and the irrigated areas around Hama, Homs, Aleppo, and Daraa constitute a vast production zone where rain-fed and irrigated agriculture is practiced together.

Before 2011, this structure not only ensured the majority of the country's food security but also provided a regular supply of agricultural products to regional markets. However, these arrangements deteriorated severely during the war years when infrastructure was targeted, irrigation systems were destroyed, and logistics networks were shattered.

Experts say reviving agriculture offers the fastest and most cost-effective path to economic recovery, boosting rural employment, slowing migration, and stimulating related



sectors such as transport, storage, and food processing. Strengthening agriculture also reduces reliance on costly imports, a critical factor given Syria's limited financial resources.

Exports once provided vital

foreign currency, but sanctions have disrupted access to fertilizers, seeds, fuel, and machinery. Lifting restrictions is seen as essential to restoring supply chains and enabling large-scale recovery.

Pakistan Customs Foils Two Gold Smuggling Attempts at Jinnah International Airport, Karachi

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Customs at Jinnah International Airport (JIAP), Karachi, have successfully foiled two separate attempts to smuggle gold and undeclared foreign currency during passenger clearance at the International Departures terminal. In both cases, a total of ten (10) STB gold bars/bullions weighing 100 tolas and foreign currency amounting to USD 11,900 were seized. The combined value of both cases is approximately PKR 50.682 million. FIRs have been lodged under the relevant provisions of the Customs Act, 1969.

Customs officials intercepted a passenger traveling to Dubai via flight No. FZ-330 after baggage scanning indicated the possible concealment of precious metal. During joint examination of the passenger's luggage, three (03) STB gold bars/bullions weighing 10 tolas each (total 30 tolas) were recovered. The gold bars were skillfully concealed inside mobile phones. In addition, undeclared foreign currency amounting to USD 4,900 was recovered from the passenger's wallet, which had not been declared at the Currency Declaration Counter. The value of this case is approximately PKR 15.682 million.

Earlier, Customs staff intercepted another passenger traveling to Istanbul via flight No. TK-709 on suspicion of concealed gold bars detected through baggage scanning. During detailed examination at the joint examination counter, seven (07) STB gold bars/bullions weighing 10 tolas each (total 70 tolas) were recovered from the passenger's baggage. A subsequent body search led to the recovery of undeclared foreign currency amounting to USD 7,000. The value of this case is approximately PKR 35 million.

In both cases, the recovered gold and foreign currency were seized and FIRs were registered under the Customs Act, 1969.

These seizures underscore FBR's commitment to curb smuggling through all channels and to protect national revenue through strict enforcement of customs laws.

Atta Tarar lauds PTV cricket team for setting world record

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar on Saturday lauded Pakistan Television's (PTV) cricket team for a historic achievement after they successfully defended a target of just 40 runs against SNGPL in the fourth inning, setting a new world record in first-class cricket.

"PTV's rise is no coincidence. From the President's Trophy 2024/25 triumph, powered by youngsters like Mohammad Shehzad and Shamyul Hussain, to creating a world record in the President's Trophy 2025/26 today, this is what happens when talent is backed, hard work is



valued, and merit is rewarded. Merit and only merit. Have refused all 'sifarishi,'" said the minister while congratulating the team on X.

The minister expressed immense pride in the team's performance under pressure during the fourth innings. He singled out Ali Usman and Ahammad Butt for their outstanding bowling displays, while also praising the superb captaincy of Shamyul Hussain.

He extended special appreciation to the PTV management and PTV Sports for their efforts in delivering results both on and off the field. He described the achievement as a proud moment for the entire organization.

Aga Khan University Graduates Over 400 Students and Installs Princess Zahra Aga Khan as Pro-Chancellor

City Desk

KARACHI: The Aga Khan University graduated 461 students from 18 degree programmes at its 38th Convocation in Pakistan and formally installed Princess Zahra Aga Khan as the University's first Pro-Chancellor. As Pro-Chancellor, Princess Zahra will guide AKU in its continuing efforts to improve quality of life.

In his message, AKU's Chancellor, His Highness the Aga Khan, noted that the Aga Khan University and its graduates carry "both an extraordinary responsibility and an extraordinary opportunity: to create, to disseminate, and to apply knowledge in ways that improve the quality of human life."

This year saw the graduation of the first cohort from the Institute for Educational Development's Bachelor of Education programme. The programme offers a rigorous blend of academic and field-based learning that prepares graduates to teach effectively in diverse school contexts.

"The University's geographic expansion has seen AKU's presence expand across Pakistan, into more cities and villages than ever before," said AKU's Pro-Chancellor, Princess Zahra Aga Khan. "From Karachi to Matiari, from Lahore to Gilgit, the University's health care professionals, educators, and researchers are part of the fabric of people's lives."

Valedictorian Muhammad Taha Nasim thanked AKU's faculty, noting how they challenged graduates to "reach our highest standards while teaching us that excellence without empathy is empty."

AKU's graduates are filling important workforce gaps. For example, in a country with a nurse-to-population ratio



of just 5.2 per 10,000, AKU alumni now hold high-level leadership positions in approximately 80 schools of nursing and midwifery.

In 2025, AKU secured more than USD\$100 million in research funding, a sign that leading global institutions hold its research capabilities in high regard. Across AKU, 27 faculty members were ranked among the top two percent of scientists globally in a well-known study conducted by a researcher at Stanford University.

"Pakistan's young people are inclusive,

comfortable across faiths and perspectives, and aware that a divided society cannot meet shared challenges. Digitally fluent, they see technology not as disruption but as opportunity — to expand knowledge, build skills, and apply learning in practical ways," noted Dr Sulaiman Shahabuddin, President of AKU.

To ensure talented students with limited financial means are able to attend AKU, the University provides financial assistance, to a large portion of the student body. In the last academic year, the University provided assistance to 72

percent of students across all classes and programmes in Pakistan.

Noorish Khan, Syeda Tasmiya Mohi-uddin, Dr. Hamzah Jehanzeb, and Sara Karim Sadruddin received Best Graduate Awards in their respective undergraduate programmes in Dental Hygiene, Education, Medicine, and Nursing.

Also present at the ceremony was Shamsh Kassim-Lakha, Founding President of AKU and Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the University of Central Asia, a sister university of AKU within the Aga Khan Development Network.

Tragic Fog Incident: Mazda Truck Plunges Into Canal, Killing 14 Family Members



Bureau Report

FAISALABAD: According to rescue sources, a family from Khanoana area of Faisalabad was returning to Faisalabad in a Mazda truck after attending the death of a close relative in Islamabad.

Rescue officials said that the motorway was closed due to heavy fog, due to which the Mazda truck had to take an alternative local route to Faisalabad via Kot Momin. Due to heavy fog near Gulpur, the driver could not see the road and the Mazda truck lost control and fell into the canal. Due to lack of water in the canal, the truck fell down, resulting in a serious accident.

A total of 23 people were on board the Mazda truck at the time of the accident, of whom 14 died on the spot while 9 people were injured. According to the police, five children are among the dead and all the deceased belong to the same family.

According to rescue sources, the seriously injured women include Shamim Parveen, Nazia Bibi and another woman, while Hasnain, Zaheer, Mumtaz, Kashif and Nadeem Abbas received minor injuries. The injured are being provided immediate medical assistance.

According to MS Dr. Mehrban of THQ Hospital Kot Momin, five injured have been shifted to THQ, of which three are in critical condition while two have minor injuries. According to the MS, no dead bodies have been shifted to the hospital yet.

According to the police, the deceased have been identified as Masari Khan, Halima Bibi, Yasin, Sonia Bibi, Pathan Bibi, Haniya, Iman Fatima, Rani Bibi, Haris, Wasim, Orin, Saqlain, Horam and Amina. All the deceased are said to belong to Khanwana area of Faisalabad. According to the Rescue 1122 report, 09 people were injured in the accident, whose names are Hasnain 2 years old, Saqlain 3 years old, Zaheer 38 years old, Mumtaz 40 years old, Kashif 32 years old, Nadeem 22 years old, Shamim Bibi 55 years old, Nadia Bibi 45 years old, Parveen Bibi 22 years old, while 14 people died in the accident, including Mishri Khan 50 years old, Halima Bibi 65 years old, Yasin 65 years old, Sonia Bibi 35 years old, Pathan Bibi 36 years old, Haniya 2 years old, Iman Fatima 19 years old, Rani Bibi 31 years old, Hasher 2 years old, Wasim Abbas 30 years old, Hareem Fatima 21 years old, Anam 2 years old, Haram Fatima 4 years old, and Saqlain 5 years old. The injured in the accident were provided with first aid and shifted to THQ Hospital Kot Momin, while the dead bodies of 14 deceased were shifted to THQ Hospital Kot Momin. All the deceased were laid to rest in the Kakran area of Saddar Jaranwala police station near Khanoana.

PAKISTAN: A Call for Justice, Restraint and Protection of Human Rights Defenders



Nazia Naz

In any democratic society, the justice system must serve as a safeguard for citizens not as an instrument of fear or intimidation. The recent cancellation of bail and issuance of arrest orders against lawyers and human rights defenders Imaan Mazari-Hazir and Hadi Ali Chattha have raised serious concerns among legal professionals and civil society in Pakistan. According to Amnesty International, the case relates to alleged "anti-state" tweets accusations that appear to stem solely from the peaceful exercise of freedom of expression and the professional duties of human rights defenders. The use of criminal charges in such circumstances reflects a troubling pattern of judicial harassment.

Lawyers and human rights defenders play a vital role in upholding justice, protecting vulnerable communities, and strengthening democratic institutions. Their work is not aimed at weakening the state, but at reinforcing accountability, transparency and the rule of law. When defenders are targeted for their lawful advocacy, it undermines public trust in institutions.

It is also important to acknowledge that Front Line Defenders, along with other international human rights organizations, has consistently raised its voice against the harassment, intimidation and misuse of legal processes targeting human rights defenders in Pakistan. Their continued engagement highlights that the protection of defenders is not only a national responsibility, but also a matter of international human rights concern. The misuse of judicial mechanisms to silence dissent creates a climate of fear that discourages lawful civic participation. Pakistan's Constitution guarantees the right to freedom of expression, due process and fair trial rights that must be protected in both law and practice. As a human rights defender working closely with affected communities, I have witnessed how challenging and risky this work can be. Many defenders continue their efforts despite threats, pressure and insecurity, motivated solely by a commitment to justice and human dignity. Targeting such individuals sends a deeply discouraging message to those who believe in peaceful and lawful advocacy. Peaceful criticism should never be equated with hostility toward the state. Strong and confident nations are built through dialogue, tolerance, and respect for differing opinions not through suppression.

Pakistan has repeatedly reaffirmed its commitment to international human rights obligations, including the protection of lawyers and human rights defenders. Upholding these commitments is essential to maintaining public confidence and strengthening the country's democratic framework. At this critical moment, restraint, wisdom, and strict adherence to due process are urgently needed. Ending judicial harassment and withdrawing baseless charges would be an important step toward restoring trust in the justice system.

Human rights defenders are not enemies of the state they are partners in building a just, inclusive and rights-respecting society.

Justice must not only be done, it must also be seen to be done.

The writer is human rights defender

AI Engineering for Everyone: Learn, Build, and Grow

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is changing the world. From smart assistants to self-driving cars, AI is behind many of today's most exciting technologies. At the heart of this transformation are AI Engineers people who build intelligent systems that can learn, adapt, and solve problems. If anyone is interested in entering this fast-growing field or wants to improve his current skills, having a clear learning path is key.

This roadmap will guide you through the essential skills and topics you need to master to become an AI Engineer. Whether you're a beginner or a working professional looking to grow, this guide will help you understand what to learn and why it matters.

AI Engineering is the process of designing, building, and deploying intelligent systems that use data to make decisions. These systems include chatbots, recommendation engines, image recognition software, autonomous vehicles, and much more.

Unlike traditional software developers, AI Engineers work with models that learn from data. This requires a mix of programming skills, knowledge of algorithms, and an understanding of how to train and improve machine learning models.

AI is used across many industries healthcare, finance, education, transportation, and more. As AI continues to grow, so does the demand for skilled professionals who can build reliable and ethical AI systems. AI Engineers play a major role in this by turning research into real-world applications.

Key Skills Needed
To succeed in AI Engineering, we'll need a mix of theoretical knowledge and hands-on practice. Here are the core skills to focus on:

1. Mathematics and Statistics
Math is the foundation of AI. Understanding key concepts in linear algebra,

calculus, probability, and statistics is important. These topics help you understand how models learn, how to evaluate them, and how to make improvements.

Don't worry you don't need to be a math genius. However, having a solid grasp of the basics will make learning AI much easier.

2. Data Science and Machine Learning
AI systems learn from data, so you must know how to work with it. Data science involves collecting, cleaning, and analyzing data to find patterns and make predictions.

Machine learning (ML) is a major part of AI. It focuses on creating algorithms that can learn from data. You'll need to understand supervised and unsupervised learning, classification, regression, clustering, and decision trees.

Python is the most popular programming language for AI and ML. Libraries like Scikit-learn, Pandas, and NumPy are widely used in the industry.

3. Deep Learning
Deep learning is a branch of ML that uses neural networks with many layers. It's especially useful for tasks like image recognition, speech processing, and natural language understanding.

We'll need to learn about:
Artificial Neural Networks (ANNs)
Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs)
Recurrent Neural Networks (RNNs)
Frameworks like Tensor Flow and PyTorch

Hands-on projects are the best way to understand deep learning. You can build image classifiers, chatbots, or sentiment analysis tools to practice.

4. Generative AI and Large Language Models (LLMs)
Generative AI is a type of AI that can

create content like text, images, and music. Tools like ChatGPT, DALL-E, and MidJourney are examples of generative AI in action.

You'll also want to explore Large Language Models (LLMs), which are powerful models trained on massive datasets. These models can write essays, answer questions, and even code. Learning how to fine-tune LLMs helps you customize them for specific tasks.

Understanding how to build, use, and fine-tune these models is a valuable skill for any AI Engineer.

5. Reinforcement Learning
Reinforcement learning (RL) is a method where an AI agent learns to make decisions by interacting with an environment. It receives rewards for good actions and penalties for bad ones.

This technique is used in robotics, games like chess and Go, and even in controlling traffic systems. RL is more advanced but is an exciting area of AI to explore once you're comfortable with ML and deep learning.

6. Retrieval-Augmented Generation (RAG)
RAG combines the power of search engines with generative AI. It helps AI systems provide more accurate and up-to-date responses by retrieving relevant documents before generating answers.

This method is especially useful for chatbots and knowledge assistants. It ensures the information provided is reliable and grounded in real sources.

Building and Evaluating AI Systems
Learning to build AI models is just the start. You also need to know how to evaluate their performance using metrics like accuracy, precision, recall, and F1 score.

You'll also explore optimization techniques to improve model performance. This includes tuning parameters,



Dr. Mushtaq Ahmed Rahu

Joint exercise

Pakistan and the United States conclude the joint military exercise, Inspired Gambit-2026.



Photo: ISPR

Centcom says anti-terror training drills to bolster US-Pakistan defence ties

Spokesman Report

US Central Command (Centcom) has commended the recently-concluded joint counter-terrorism training exercises with Pakistan, saying such drills will strengthen the longstanding defence ties between the two countries.

Military-to-military ties between Pakistan and the United States appeared to be getting strength, marked by

renewed joint training, major defence sales and unusually warm rhetoric from President Donald Trump towards Pakistan's military leadership.

A statement issued by the US Central Command (Centcom) on X platform said American and Pakistani troops this week concluded joint training at Pakistan's National Counter-Terrorism Center in Pabbi.

The statement further

said "This week, US and Pakistan Army Soldiers completed training at Pakistan's National Counter-Terrorism Center during Exercise Inspired Gambit, which focused on combined infantry skills and tactics, and counterterrorism operations. Training exercises like this between the US and Pakistan strengthen our long-standing defence ties."

The exercise comes amid

broader signs of re-engagement between the two defence establishments. In December, the United States approved the sale of advanced technology and upgrade packages for Pakistan's F-16 fighter aircraft, a deal valued at approximately \$686 million. The approval followed regional tensions after Pakistan and India fought a brief but intense five-day conflict in May 2025.

In June 2025, President Donald Trump hosted Field Marshal Munir at the White House for a lunch meeting — the first time a sitting US president formally received the head of Pakistan's army. The meeting took place amid worsening disagreement with India over Trump's repeated claim that he personally halted the May conflict between the two nuclear-armed neighbours.

Will not allow anti-armed forces, judiciary speeches: Ayaz Sadiq



City Desk

ISLAMABAD: National Assembly (NA) Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq said on Saturday that he would not allow any MNA in the assembly to speak against the armed forces of Pakistan and the judiciary.

He was speaking to the media in Lahore.

"Where is it written that whenever a leader of the opposition rises to speak, he will be allowed to speak?" he questioned.

The speaker advised the opposition to make speeches in the parlia-

ment which focus on projects of public welfare. "If opposition leaders refrain from making provocative speeches, they will be allowed to speak," he said, adding that so long as the protest by the opposition remained peaceful, nobody would object to it.

It was his, Ayaz went on to say, responsibility not to allow the MNAs to deliver anti-Pakistan speeches.

He made it clear that nobody would be allowed to spread mischief in the assembly. "Parliament is the platform for the resolution of all the issues confronted by the masses."

Serial rapist accused of abusing over 100 kids arrested in Karachi



Bureau Report

KARACHI: The Karachi police on Saturday arrested a serial rapist, who is accused of sexually assaulting over 100 children.

The accused was arrested by the East Investigation Team of the Karachi Police in the Tipu Sultan area.

According to senior police officials, the investigation team took action after being tipped off by the affected children.

The main suspects in the case have been identified as Imran and Waqas Khan.

According to Superintendent of Police (SP) Investigation Usman Sadozai, seven complaints of sexual abuse were filed with the police

between 2020 and 2025.

In all of these cases, the DNA of the same person was found, which shocked the police.

Sadozai stated that all victims were aged between 12 and 13 years, while in one case, the victim was abused by two individuals.

A special team was formed on the instructions of Additional IG Azad Khan on January 6 to investigate the case, which led to the arrest of the suspects.

Police said that the arrested suspects will be presented in court, and a remand will be sought to continue the investigation.

Sadozai emphasised that DNA tests were immediately conducted in all cases, and the action had been taken on the basis of collected evidence.

RAW agent among 49 terrorists arrested in Punjab's crackdown

Bureau Report

LAHORE: The Counter Terrorism Department of Punjab arrested 49 alleged militants, including an Indian intelligence agent associated with RAW, in 425 intelligence-based operations across various cities over the past month.

The alleged Indian agent, identified as Mujtaba, who was arrested in Lahore, was found in possession of explosive materials, weapons, and blueprints of important buildings.

The CTD officials said explosives, two hand-grenades, six IEDs (improvised explosive devices), and 36 detonators were seized from the terrorists.

Security fuses, wires, and cash were also confiscated during the operations, they added.

The arrested militants have been identified as Shaukat, Naveed, Abdul Rehman, Amjad Khan, Shahid, Abrar, Danish Khan, and Ehsan-



ullah, among others.

According to CTD officials, the terrorists had planned to carry out attacks at various locations in a bid to cause fear

and disrupt peace.

The raids were conducted in several cities, including Lahore, Rawalpindi, Jhelum, Hafizabad, Gujranwala, Dera

Ghazi Khan, Faisalabad, Chinot, and Sialkot.

Additionally, 6,131 combing operations were carried out last month,

resulting in the detention of 599 suspects.

A total of 243,546 people were interrogated during these operations.

15 dead, dozens injured as dense fog causes accidents in Punjab, KP

News Desk

ISLAMABAD: At least 15 people were killed and dozens injured in road accidents caused by dense fog in different parts of the country in the last 24 hours, sources said on Saturday.

Dense fog across various parts of the country led to a series of traffic accidents and also caused significant travel disruptions.

Authorities in Punjab have closed Motorways in many cities as a precautionary measure to ensure public safety.

In Sargodha, a truck carrying passengers lost control and fell into a canal due to the dense fog.

Fourteen people died on the spot, while nine others sustained injuries.

Among the deceased were four men, six women, and four children.



According to rescue sources, the passengers were travelling from Islamabad to Faisalabad.

Rescue teams retrieved the bodies and injured individuals from the canal and transferred them to nearby hospitals for treatment.

The identities of all the victims have been confirmed.

In another incident, a dumper truck loaded with sand overturned in the Head

Khanki area of Wazirabad, Punjab, due to low visibility caused by fog.

The driver and his helper were injured and taken to the hospital. Local authorities confirmed that the accident was a result of poor visibility.

Meanwhile, in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Dir Bala district, a passenger bus overturned after its tyre burst in foggy and cold conditions.

A child was killed in the incident,

and 12 others were injured. The injured passengers were immediately taken to the hospital, with some in critical condition.

According to a Motorway Police spokesperson, several sections of the motorways in Punjab have been closed to traffic due to the fog.

The affected areas include: M-2 Motorway (Lahore to Kot Momin); M-11 Motorway (Lahore to Sialkot); M-3 Motorway (Faizpur to Jaranwala); M-4 Motorway (Pindi Bhattian to Gojra).

The spokesperson has urged the public to avoid unnecessary travel during this weather and warned that fog could be dangerous for drivers.

Motorway Police also advised that the safest travel times are between 10am and 6pm.