

Zardari calls for stronger Pak-German ties

Steinmeier lauds Pakistan for resolving disputes

President Asif Ali Zardari on Friday stressed the imperative of realizing the available potential to expand political, economic, and defense cooperation between Pakistan and Germany, with a greater focus on trade, emerging technologies, climate resilience, skills development, people-to-people and cultural exchanges.

"During a meeting with Federal President of Germany Frank-Walter Steinmeier, President Asif Ali Zardari thanked him for his invitation and the warm hospitality extended to him and his delegation, a Presidency's news release said."

He said the visit reflected Pakistan's commitment to deepening its longstanding cordial, friendly relations with Germany and readiness to translate existing relations into a more stronger, robust and mutually beneficial partnership through sustained constructive engagement.

The president noted with profound appreciation that this landmark visit is now taking place after 23 years defining a significant chapter in bilateral relations as the two countries

commemorate 75 years of establishment of diplomatic relations this year.

He stated that Pakistan highly values Germany as a major European partner, and greatly admires German support towards women empowerment, social protection and human development.

President Asif Ali Zardari stated that Pakistan stands prepared for expanding bilateral cooperation beyond traditional areas into innovative and mutually beneficial collaboration with Germany in scientific development, healthcare and education, vocational training and technological advancement, trade and investment, agriculture, commerce and industry, and climate resilience through enhanced government-to-government, business-to-business, and experts level interactions.

President Asif Ali Zardari expressed his gratitude to President Frank-Walter Steinmeier for German acknowledgement of Pakistan's sincere mediation role in US-Iran conflict.

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CDF Munir vows to hit terror outfits hard

Chief of Defence Forces and Chief of Army Staff Field Marshal Asim Munir vowed to continue the campaign against 'Indian-sponsored terrorist outfits' and 'hit them hard wherever they are', the military's media wing said on Friday.

According to a statement issued by the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), CDF Munir visited Corps Headquarters in Peshawar. Upon arrival, he was received by the Peshawar Corps Commander. The army chief was briefed on the prevailing security situation, ongoing counter-

terrorism operations, border management measures, and the operational preparedness of formations deployed in the province.

"Field Marshal commended the high morale and professionalism of officers and troops, directing them to continue vigilance and highest standards of operational readiness to effectively counter threats," the statement said.

ISPR said, "He underscored that we would continue the campaign against Indian-sponsored terrorist outfits to the fullest and hit them hard wherever they are."

"While paying tributes to the sacrifices of the people of Pakistan, including Shuhada and Ghazis of the security forces, CDF Munir affirmed that with the support of the people, Pakistan would surely inflict total defeat to the terrorists and their perverted ideology," the statement concluded.

CDF Munir arrived in



Peshawar a day earlier to attend a meeting of the Federal Apex Committee on the National Action Plan, chaired by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday. The meeting discussed the security situation in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (K-P), with the government reiterating its commitment to restoring peace and accelerating development in the province.

PM Shehbaz defended the imposition of emergency and governor's rule in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (K-P), saying the measures had been necessitated by the deteriorating security situation, and vowed to restore peace, prosperity and development in the province.

Defending the decision, he maintained that the Constitution and law empowered the government to take the measures implemented in K-P.

He thanked the coalition partners for supporting the move, particularly President Zardari and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) President Nawaz Sharif.

The meeting came amid a resurgence of terrorism in K-P. Security assessments presented to the federal cabinet showed that terrorist incidents in the province had increased by 195 per cent between March 2024 and September 2026, with police and security personnel bearing the brunt of attacks.

On Thursday, four police personnel, including a Counter-Terrorism Department deputy superintendent of police, were martyred in an exchange of fire with armed men in Karak. In a separate incident in Bannu, two civilians were injured in a remote-controlled bomb explosion. NEWS DESK

PM approves Rs 4,500 wheat price for 2027

Says to open economy to global markets



Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Friday approved an indicative wheat price of Rs4,500 per maund for 2027, up Rs1,000 from last year's Rs3,500, in a decision aimed at supporting farmers and boosting domestic production.

The prime minister said the increase was meant to provide relief to growers facing higher production costs, rising petrol prices and inflationary pressure. He said giving farmers an effective incentive to sow wheat was among the main objectives of the decision, a Prime Minister's Office news release said.

The prime minister said the decision would be an important step towards strengthening national food security, encouraging local production and bringing stability to the agriculture sector. The new price is expected to help farmers recover their input costs and earn a reasonable profit, he said.

The farmers have faced financial difficulties in recent years because of inflation and rising agricultural expenses, while Pakistan has also had to import wheat over the past two years, the

prime minister noted.

The government, he said, expects the indicative price to encourage growers to take greater interest in wheat cultivation, leading to extensive sowing in the coming season and better prospects for domestic output.

The prime minister acknowledged the guidance of President Asif Ali Zardari and Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif in the matter, as well as the consultation and cooperation of the chief ministers of Punjab and Sindh.

He expressed special thanks to Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz for her cooperation and valuable suggestions during the consultative process, and appreciated her role in it. He also thanked Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah for his cooperation.

The prime minister expressed the hope that the measure would contribute to the economic well-being of farmers, the stability of the agricultural economy and efforts to make the country more self-sufficient in food. He said he expected 2027 to bring positive results for the agriculture sector and the prosperity of farmers.

Separately, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday reiterated Pakistan's willingness to open its economy to promising international markets and consult globally recognised economic experts to advance the country's economic growth and prosperity.

The prime minister expressed these views during a meeting with Peter Briggs, Managing Director of North American Operations at international consulting firm Alvarez & Marsal (A&M).

Shehbaz Sharif said that after achieving economic and fiscal stability, the government was taking effective measures to introduce deep-rooted structural reforms and promote export-led growth and a productive economy.

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Gwadar attack: 7 terrorists killed

Security forces have foiled an attempted terrorist attack on an unoccupied construction company camp in Gwadar, Balochistan, killing seven terrorists and surrounding several others, according to security sources.

The sources said the forces acted promptly to prevent the terrorist attack.

According to security sources, a clearance operation was underway in the surrounding areas to eliminate any remaining terrorist threats.

The sources said three terrorists had been killed on Thursday night during the operation, while three additional suspects were surrounded by security personnel.

Separately, four other suspected terrorists had been encircled at a hotel near the Gwadar highway, the sources said. The General Officer Commanding (GOC) of Gwadar was personally leading the operation, according to security sources. Operations are continuing as security personnel work to neutralise the remaining suspects.

Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi has paid tribute to the security forces for foiling a terrorist attack in Gwadar and eliminating seven terrorists. He praised the forces for their professionalism, courage and determination in countering terrorism.

"I am proud of the brave personnel of our security forces who thwarted the attack by terrorists, the scourge of our land," Naqvi said.

He added that terrorists who attempt to obstruct the development and progress of Balochistan would meet a miserable end.

The interior minister reaffirmed that the entire nation stands shoulder to shoulder with the security forces in the fight against terrorism. INP

R4 bloc stands with Riyadh



At the Regional Four (R4) Foreign Ministers' Meeting held in Istanbul on Friday, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar and other foreign ministers expressed solidarity with Saudi Arabia over the recent Houthi attacks targeting the kingdom, the Foreign Office (FO) said.

The R4 group, comprising Pakistan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Türkiye, emerged in March and has been focusing on regional security and mediation efforts between the United States and Iran.

The R4-plus meeting with France, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom is also being held in Istanbul.

According to a statement by the FO on social media, DPM Dar participated in the sixth R4 Foreign Ministers' Meeting alongside Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan, Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty, and Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud of Saudi Arabia.

The ministers reviewed developments in the region since their last meeting in New York in September, with "particular focus on the situation in the Middle East and related security challenges and conflicts", the FO said.

They expressed solidarity with Saudi Arabia and reaffirmed their support for its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The FO added that the ministers also condemned the Houthi attacks targeting Saudi Arabia and underscored the importance of respecting state sovereignty.

"They discussed ways to strengthen regional coordination and advance diplomatic efforts to promote lasting peace, security, and stability," it said.

Bilateral meetings

Dar earlier held bilateral meetings with the Turkish and Egyptian foreign ministers, on the sidelines of the R4 meeting and a meeting between the R4 and European diplomats in Istanbul, the FO said.

In a post on X, the FO said that Dar met with Fidan ahead of the ministerial meeting, thanking him for hosting the meetings. The pair discussed bilateral relations and regional developments, particularly the situation in the Middle East and Palestine.

"They expressed concern over threats to regional stability and underscored the importance of dialogue, diplomacy and coordinated efforts to promote regional peace and security," the FO statement said.

Additionally, Dar and Fidan strongly condemned Houthi attacks on Saudi Arabia and reaffirmed their commitment to close coordination on regional issues, including under the Makkah Defence Agreement.

"Both leaders reaffirmed their commitment to further strengthening the longstanding bonds of friendship and brotherhood between Pakistan and Türkiye, and to deepening cooperation across all areas of mutual interest, both bilaterally and in multilateral fora," the FO added.

Later, the FO said that Dar also met with Egyptian FM Abdelatty on

the sidelines of the ministerial meeting, where the two exchanged views on regional and international developments.

In particular, they discussed the situation in Palestine and the Middle East, and underscored the importance of "sustained dialogue and diplomacy" in addressing challenges in the region.

The two reaffirmed the "longstanding and fraternal ties" between Pakistan and Egypt, and highlighted the importance of sustained high-level engagement to further advance bilateral relations, the FO statement said.

"They agreed to impart greater momentum to cooperation across a range of areas, including trade, business-to-business linkages, agriculture, pharmaceutical, connectivity, renewable energy, defence, and people-to-people exchanges," the FO added.

The ministers also reaffirmed their commitment to continued consultations and closer coordination under the R4 framework, as well as on matters of mutual interest, it said.

Separately, DPM Dar met with German Foreign Minister Johann Wadepuhl on the sidelines of the meeting and expressed the desire to further strengthen bilateral ties "through sustained engagement and cooperation across multiple areas of mutual interest", the FO said.

According to the FO, the two ministers discussed relations between Pakistan and Germany and exchanged views on regional and international developments. They stressed the importance of dialogue, diplomacy and sustained international engagement to promote peace and stability and to address the evolving challenges in the region. NEWS DESK

National



Balochistan needs smaller units for better governance: Bugti

World



Seven killed in attack at church in Jordan

Money



Pakistan can meet rising Maldivian demand, says Jam

Sports



PSL 12 player auction date revealed

Glamour



Cohen revives Ali G, cites fears

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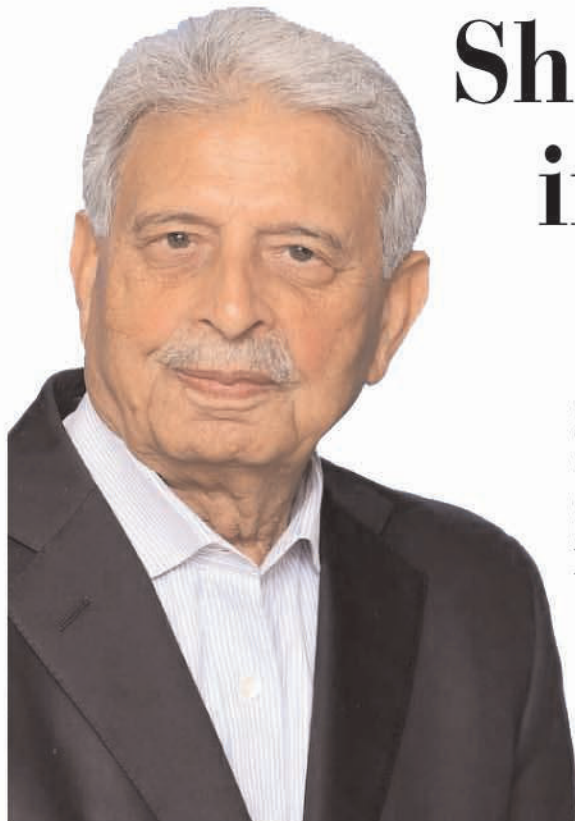


12 killed, over 25 injured in coach-van collision

NATIONAL

DTM

Shehbaz steered economy in right direction, says Rana Tanveer



Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research Rana Tanveer Hussain has said that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had steered the country in the right direction and economy of the country had improved with better indicators.

The minister said, "We have established a clear direction and brought stability to the system". He said that Pakistan had been hit hardest by the repercussions of the Gulf conflict and the impact on us had been the most severe.

He further said that the government through its

policies had managed to absorb these shocks, ensuring that the full brunt of the impact was not passed on to the public.

Addressing the inauguration ceremony of the Central Plant Quarantine Laboratory (CPQL) at the Department of Plant Protection in Karachi and talking to media persons here Friday, he said that the laboratory, equipped to meet international standards, would enhance testing capabilities and support the country's agricultural sector. He described the state-of-the-art facility as a significant step towards strengthening agricultural research, plant protection and Pakistan's export potential. "Protecting farmers' interests is the government's foremost priority. Strengthening our laboratory infrastructure will help improve agricultural productivity in international markets and safeguard plant health," he said.

Highlighting progress in plant quarantine, Rana Tanveer Hussain said that interceptions had declined from 376 to 23, expressing confidence that improved laboratory facilities and technical capacity would help reduce them further.

The minister also said that the Department of Plant Protection would be able to recruit and train qualified staff to operate the CPQL and the Federal Pesticides Testing and Reference Laboratory (FPTRL) efficiently.

He also announced an agreement with the International Centre for Chemical and Biological Sciences at the University of Karachi's H.E.J. Research Institute of Chemistry to strengthen cooperation in food security and research. The collaboration will provide access to commercial pesticide-residue testing facilities, supporting

agricultural quality assurance and export compliance.

Discussing wheat and sugar markets, the minister stressed coordination among federal and provincial governments, farmers and wheat and sugar industry stakeholders. He said that policy decisions would be guided by available data and the broader interests of the agricultural economy. On sugar exports, he highlighted that Pakistan currently had a surplus that could benefit farmers, but stressed that accurate data on local demand was essential before deciding on any imports or exports.

He credited Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's vision and commitment to development, saying that stronger agricultural institutions were essential for expanding export opportunities. He said that the facility would support the country's capacity for plant quarantine and pesticide testing, contributing to safer agricultural inputs.

He also reaffirmed the government's commitment to food security, farmers' welfare and sustainable agricultural development. He added that the Prime Minister had called for a new data-collection system to improve agricultural planning.

Replying to a question about Governor Rule and Emergency in KPK, he said that the actions or measures required to combat terrorism were distinct from those used to address general law and order.

Rana Tanveer said that special arrangements had been made for KPK area and it was worth noting that this cannot be extended indefinitely. Constitutionally, Governor's Rule can be imposed for a maximum of six months and it cannot be extended by even a single day. In contrast, a state of emergency can be maintained for an indefinite period, he added. **NEWS DESK**

Lanjar orders review of security for political, religious leaders

An important meeting of the Provincial Threat Assessment Committee was held under the chairmanship of Sindh Minister for Home and Law Zia-ul-Hassan Lanjar to review security arrangements for important personalities, political leaders and religious figures.

The meeting was attended by ACS Home Iqbal Memon, IGP Sindh Javed Alam Odho, representatives of law enforcement agencies and other relevant officials. Addressing the meeting, Sindh Home Minister Zia-ul-Hassan Lanjar directed the authorities to conduct a fresh review of the security provided to all important personalities, political leaders and religious figures. He stressed that the Provincial Threat Assessment Committee's report and recommendations, along with available information, must be given due importance in this regard.

He made it clear that decisions regarding the provision of security or any increase in security arrangements must be based on genuine threats and actual security requirements. Sindh Home Minister further directed that additional personnel deployed in the name of security be withdrawn immediately. He also called for effective measures to eliminate security arrangements provided without proper authorization.

He emphasized that unnecessary deployments must not be allowed and that available personnel should be utilized according to actual needs and priorities. Zia-ul-Hassan Lanjar further stated that the process of providing security must be transparent, effective and subject to regular monitoring. He directed the relevant institutions to make security-related decisions on the basis of credible information, the nature of threats and the recommendations of the Threat Assessment Committee to ensure the appropriate use of resources.

Sindh Home Minister said that the protection of the lives and property of the public was the government's foremost priority. However, he noted that the availability of security personnel and their effective deployment must also be ensured. He stressed that, rather than allocating security resources for unnecessary purposes, priority should be given to protecting individuals and locations where the nature of the threat makes the deployment of personnel essential. Sindh Home Minister directed the relevant authorities to continuously review security arrangements and complete all necessary measures in a coordinated manner. He emphasized that this approach would help protect individuals facing genuine threats while ensuring the effective utilization of the human resources of law enforcement agencies. **NEWS DESK**

Sindh steps up Mpox surveillance

The Sindh Health Department has strengthened surveillance, contact tracing and case management measures following the detection of seven Mpox cases over the past week. The Department is closely monitoring the situation and ensuring timely identification of cases and appropriate clinical care to prevent further transmission. The situation is being managed through established public health protocols, and there is no need for undue concern.

The Department has advised public and private healthcare facilities to strictly implement infection prevention and control (IPC) measures. The public is also encouraged to maintain good hand hygiene, exercise caution in crowded places, particularly healthcare facilities, and avoid direct contact with skin lesions, rashes or personal belongings of suspected or confirmed cases. Sharing towels, clothing, bedding and other personal items should be avoided.

The Health Department is maintaining active surveillance and conducting contact tracing to identify and monitor individuals who may have been exposed to confirmed cases. Appropriate clinical care is being provided to patients admitted to public hospitals, while healthcare facilities have been advised to ensure the use of personal protective equipment wherever indicated and follow all relevant safety protocols. Separately, the Sindh Healthcare Commission (SHCC) has sealed Ibn-e-Hassan Hospital in Karachi following a laboratory report confirming an Mpox case in a 20-day-old infant, after concerns were identified regarding infection prevention and control practices.

The Health Department emphasises that Mpox is a preventable and manageable public health concern. Individuals who develop an unusual rash, blisters or skin lesions, particularly following close contact with a suspected or confirmed case, should seek prompt medical assessment and inform healthcare professionals of any relevant exposure.

Those with suspected Mpox should avoid close physical contact with others until assessed by a healthcare professional. The Department urges the public to follow recommended preventive measures and rely on verified information issued through official sources, while avoiding the circulation of unconfirmed reports on social media. **NEWS DESK**

Three killed in firing over land dispute

Three persons were killed and four others injured in a firing incident over a land dispute near Kandiaro in Sindh's Naushahro Feroze district, according to police sources quoted by TV channels.

According to initial reports, the incident occurred when a rival party allegedly opened fire over a land dispute in the area. Following the incident, rescue teams rushed to the scene and shifted the bodies and injured persons to a nearby hospital. Police have launched an investigation into the incident to determine the circumstances surrounding the firing. **NEWS DESK**

Four cops injured

Four police personnel were injured when a police van overturned after its tyre burst on Shahrah-e-Bhutto in Karachi on Friday.

According to traffic police, the van's tyre burst near Memon Goth Toll Plaza, causing the driver to lose control. The vehicle then collided with a roadside railing and overturned, injuring four police personnel, a local news channel reported. Upon receiving information, police and rescue teams rushed to the site and shifted the injured police personnel to a nearby hospital. **NEWS DESK**

Bilawal pays tributes to Nusrat Bhutto on her death anniversary

Chairman of Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has paid rich tribute to Madre-e-Jamhooriat Begum Nusrat Bhutto on her death anniversary, saying she is a bright and unforgettable chapter in the struggle for democracy, the supremacy of the Constitution and the people's right to rule.

The PPP Chairman said in his message that during the dark era of dictatorship, Madre-e-Jamhooriat endured imprisonment, state repression and unbearable hardship, yet never compromised on her commitment to democracy and the rights of the people.

Her steadfastness, sacrifices and democratic struggle will forever live on in Pakistan's political history.

The PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said Begum Nusrat Bhutto turned personal grief and tragedy into courage and national resolve, keeping the flame of democracy burning.

Her life bears witness that sacrifices

made for principles are never in vain, and that the struggle for democracy is carried forward from one generation to the next.

He said that the true way to honor the struggle and sacrifices of the Madre-e-Jamhooriat is to continue the fight for democracy, the supremacy of the Constitution, public rights and equality and to carry her democratic mission forward. **NEWS DESK**



Improved internet need of hour: Aseefa Bhutto

First Lady Aseefa Bhutto Zardari on Friday said that improved internet connectivity was the need of the hour for Pakistan's youth and business community.

Speaking during question hour in the National Assembly, she said Nawabshah lacked 4G and 5G services and called for joint efforts to improve internet connectivity across

the country.

"There is no 5G or 4G in Nawabshah, so I sincerely request that let's sit together to try and improve internet for the entire country," she said.

Aseefa Bhutto invited Parliamentary Secretary for Information Technology and Telecommunication Sabheen Ghauri, who was responding to questions related to the Ministry, to sit with the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) to work together to address internet connectivity issues. **NEWS DESK**



Memon lauds Nusrat Bhutto's struggle for democracy

Sindh Senior Minister and Provincial Minister for Information, Transport and Mass Transit Sharjeel Inam Memon, while paying tribute to Begum Nusrat Bhutto on her 15th death anniversary, said her struggle for democracy and sacrifices are an unforgettable chapter in history. She waged an unparalleled struggle for democracy, the supremacy of the Constitution, and public rights, and remained steadfast in her principles while facing all kinds of difficulties.

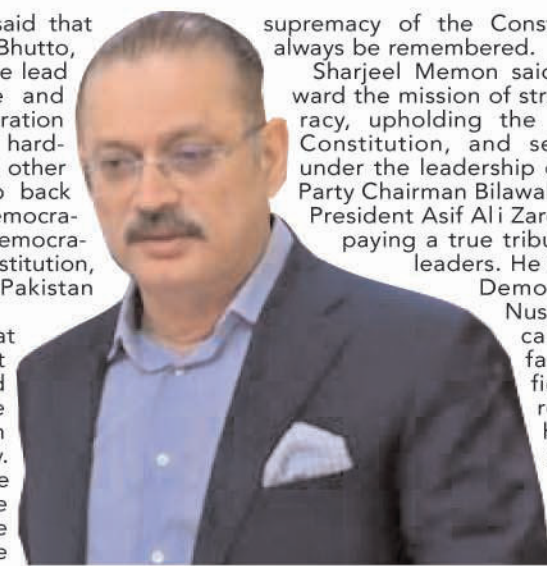
In a statement, Memon said that after Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Begum Nusrat Bhutto took the lead in the democratic struggle and played a key role in the restoration of democracy. Despite the hardships of imprisonment and all other difficulties, she did not step back from her mission to restore democracy. She dedicated her life to democracy, the supremacy of the Constitution, and the ideology of the Pakistan Peoples Party.

The senior minister said that the sacrifices of Begum Nusrat Bhutto and Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto are an unforgettable chapter in Pakistan's democratic history. These great leaders made everlasting sacrifices for the survival of democracy, the rights of the people, and the

supremacy of the Constitution, which will always be remembered.

Sharjeel Memon said that carrying forward the mission of strengthening democracy, upholding the supremacy of the Constitution, and serving the people under the leadership of Pakistan Peoples Party Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and President Asif Ali Zardari is equivalent to paying a true tribute to the martyred leaders. He said that Mother of Democracy Begum

Nusrat Bhutto's political struggle, steadfastness, and sacrifices will always be remembered, and her democratic struggle will continue to serve as a guiding light for future generations. **NEWS DESK**



NATIONAL

DTM

Punjab bans 'unauthorized' protocol for cabinet members

The Punjab government has barred cabinet members, advisers, special assistants and other individuals from using official protocol, including permanent police escorts and official flags on vehicles, without proper authorization.

In a statement posted on X on Friday, the Punjab government said that, on the instructions of Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif, immediate action had been ordered against the unauthorized use of official protocol.

The Chief Minister's Office has issued a notification titled "Chief Minister's Priority Instructions," directing the relevant authorities to ensure immediate compliance.

According to the notification, no police escort shall be permanently assigned to any member of the provincial cabinet, adviser, special assistant to the chief minister, parliamentary secretary, chairperson of a standing committee, member of the Provincial Assembly, government officer or private individual without valid authorization.

The notification also prohibits the use of a flagstaff or the display of an official flag on any vehicle by individuals who are not legally entitled to do so.

The Provincial Police Officer/Inspector General of Police has been directed to ensure immediate implementation of the instructions and withdraw all police escorts found to be deployed without valid authorization, the notification added.

Earlier, Maryam Nawaz Sharif gave the police four weeks to improve the overall law and order situation, especially regarding action on crimes against children and women. If the situation does not improve, she has warned to dismiss the involved officers.

The CM voiced concern about the law and order situation in Rawalpindi Division and instructed the police to step up their efforts to combat severe crimes, internal corruption, and unlawful gun possession.

During a special meeting on law and order, which was attended by district police officers (DPOs) and regional police officers (RPOs) via video link, she gave these directions. ■■

Terrorism-hit families in KP paid Rs 117bn

Minister of State for Interior Talal Chaudhry on Friday apprised the Senate that Rs117 billion had been paid in compensation for homes damaged in terrorism-affected areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, while about Rs 65 billion remained to be disbursed.

Replying to a calling attention notice about the non-disbursement of rehabilitation/compensation fund for the displaced residents of South Waziristan who lost their homes and livelihoods during different security operations carried out in the area during the year 2008 and 2009 moved by Senator Dost Muhammad, he said an initial survey in five agencies had identified 105,744 damaged houses, including 66,989 fully damaged and 38,755 partially damaged. In South Waziristan, a subsequent survey recorded 113,716 houses, with 109,312 completing the survey process, he said.

Under the compensation plan, owners of fully damaged houses were to receive Rs 400,000, while those whose houses were partially damaged were to receive Rs160,000. Payments began in 2014 and continued in subsequent years, he added.

He said the federal and provincial governments had conducted a special audit of the compensation programme after the Senate Standing Committee on States and Frontier Regions (SAFRON) raised concerns about the distribution of funds and recommended that further payments be withheld.

He said the audit process was before the Departmental Accounts Committee, whose meeting was pending. The matter would then be placed before the SAFRON Committee, which would review it. The federal government was ready to provide the remaining funds, he added.

The minister said Khyber Pakhtunkhwa also received one per cent of the NFC Award for counter-terrorism, separate from the compensation programme.

He said about Rs8.5 billion under that allocation had already been provided.

Fuel subsidy benefit over 10m: Minister of State for Finance and Revenue Bilal Azhar Kayani told the Senate on Friday that more than 10 million people were benefiting from the government's targeted fuel subsidy, while Rs1,676 billion had been budgeted under the petroleum levy for the current year.

Replying to various questions during Question Hour, he said motorcyclists were receiving Rs500 worth of free petrol each week, while owners of vehicles up to 800cc were getting Rs1,000 in relief on 10 litres of petrol.

He said the subsidy was being provided at petrol pumps and there was no fuel supply problem.

Azhar Kayani said the impact of the regional conflict on petroleum prices was being felt across countries, but the government was providing targeted relief to motorcyclists, rickshaw and loader operators, and users of small cars.

Responding to a supplementary, he said advance tax rates on property purchases and sales had been reduced to lower transaction costs. The government was also preparing a wider package for the construction sector, including measures to address concerns about collateral, guarantees and procurement procedures.

He said the Prime Minister's Apna Ghar scheme offered loans of up to Rs10 million at a five per cent rate. Thousands of people had benefited, and loans worth about Rs100 billion had been approved, he added.

The minister said no property tax amnesty was currently planned. Money brought into Pakistan through Roshan Digital Accounts could be invested and later repatriated, he said.

Rs1bn recovered: Minister of State for Finance and Revenue Bilal Azhar Kayani said on Friday informed the Senate that misuse had been detected in 5.5 per cent of cases under the Export Facilitation Scheme, with about Rs1 billion recovered and the remaining cases pending before courts.

Replying to a question during Question Hour, he said the scheme enabled exporters to import inputs at lower cost for export production, making Pakistani goods more competitive in international markets. The government would retain and improve the scheme in consultation with exporters, he added.

Azhar Kayani said some importers had sold goods in the domestic market instead of using them to produce export items. In such cases, the waived import duty was recovered and the user barred from future participation in the scheme.

He said no one involved in misuse would be given any concession, whether from within or outside the government.

The minister said the government had introduced changes to prevent further abuse and was strengthening legal remedies, appellate tribunals and alternative dispute resolution to help settle cases more efficiently. Consultations with exporters and industry representatives on further improvements were also under way.

Replying to another query, Azhar Kayani said businesses with annual income between Rs150 million and Rs500 million had been exempted from super tax. The rate for businesses earning more than Rs500 million had been reduced from 10 to eight per cent, while exporters deriving at least 80 per cent of their sales from exports had also been exempted.

He said the government would consider further reductions as fiscal space became available, with the aim of eventually eliminating the tax. ■■■■

Lahore world's most polluted city with 344 AQI



Lahore topped the ranking of the world's most polluted major cities on Friday, recording an Air Quality Index (AQI) of 344, as doctors advised residents to wear masks to protect themselves from hazardous air pollution.

According to data recorded at around 8am, Swiss air quality monitoring platform IQAir ranked Lahore first, with air quality falling in the hazardous category.

IQAir identified fine particulate matter PM2.5, which is associated with cancer and other serious health conditions, as the city's main pollutant. Its concentration was recorded at 57 times the World Health Organisation's annual guideline. These microscopic particles can enter the bloodstream, increasing the risk of stroke, heart disease, lung cancer and severe chronic respiratory illnesses.

India's capital, Delhi, ranked second among the world's most polluted major cities, recording an AQI of 244, classified as very unhealthy. Dakar in Senegal recorded an AQI of 184, while India's Mumbai and Kolkata registered readings of 179 and 172, respectively. Air quality in all three cities was classified as unhealthy.

Pollution levels varied across Lahore, with Iqbal Town recording the city's highest AQI of 535.

Airwash on Badian Road recorded an AQI of 497, followed by Kahna at 446 and Defence Phase 5 at 360. The AQI stood at 350 in Model Town and 253 on Barki Road. Cooler seasonal air can trap pollutants close to the ground, contributing to a hazardous mix of crop-residue smoke, traffic emissions, industrial fumes and construction dust.

Delhi is frequently ranked among the world's most polluted capitals, with authorities often attributing its annual smog crisis to the burning of crop stubble in neighbouring Punjab and Haryana. UNICEF has warned that polluted air places children at increased risk of acute respiratory infections. A 2023 study also found that air pollution can reduce life expectancy by more than five years in parts of South Asia. Across the region, severe smog regularly disrupts daily life, forcing school closures, slowing transport and placing additional pressure on public health systems. ■■

New Performance Evaluation System on the cards

Parliamentary Secretary for Maritime Affairs Dr Darshan on Friday informed the National Assembly that the Establishment Division was preparing to launch an online Performance Evaluation Report (PER) module under the Human Resource Management Information System (HRMIS), replacing the manual, paper-based process with a digital and auditable framework governed by the Draft PER Rules, 2026.

Responding to questions during question hour, he said the Establishment Division was implementing the system with technical support from the National Information Technology Board (NITB).

He said the first phase would cover the Pakistan Administrative Service (PAS), Police Service of Pakistan (PSP), Secretariat Group and Office Management Group (OMG), for officers in Basic Pay Scales 17 to 21.

The system would feature automated and secure workflows, grade-distribution caps and a fixed deadline under the PER calendar. It would also introduce a strict, multi-tiered processing timeline of 10 to 15 working days for each stage, from the PER Administrator to the Cadre Administrator.

Technical development and testing of the module had been completed, and a phased nationwide rollout would begin very soon, he added.

Responding to a question about the time required to process posting and transfer requests, Dr Darshan said the duration varied according to the nature of the case, the cadre or group concerned and, where applicable, the receipt of clearance regarding an officer's availability for transfer from their current place of posting.

During the last financial year, the average processing time for posting and transfer requests ranged from one to 15 days, depending on the nature and procedural requirements of each case.

The parliamentary secretary said cases received for initiating disciplinary proceedings against officers were examined and processed within seven days.

He said Rule 10(7) of the Civil Servants (Efficiency and Discipline) Rules, 2020, required inquiry officers to conclude disciplinary proceedings within 60 days of the issuance of the inquiry order and submit their reports within a further seven days.

The rule empowered the competent authority to extend the initial 60-day period for an inquiry officer or inquiry committee, as applicable, provided that reasons for the extension were recorded.

Upon receipt of the inquiry report, the accused officer was allowed a maximum of 14 days to submit a defence in response to a show-cause notice, if issued.

The competent authority subsequently decided the cases in accordance with the relevant rules.

Dr Darshan said disciplinary proceedings initiated under Rule 7 or Rule 9 of the rules were concluded, on average, within 60 to 120 days, unless an extension had been granted. ■■■■

Provinces allocate Rs166bn for flood protection: NA told

Provincial governments have allocated around Rs166 billion for development projects related to irrigation and flood protection during the fiscal year 2025-26, as Pakistan steps up efforts to strengthen its resilience to climate-related disasters, State Minister for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination Dr Shezra Mansab Ali Khan Khral informed the National Assembly on Friday.

Responding to questions during the question hour, she said provincial governments had also earmarked approximately Rs93 billion for current expenditure on irrigation services, Rs33.6 billion for environmental protection and at least Rs70 billion for water supply, sanitation and sewerage.

She said the federal government was working with provincial administrations to improve preparedness for floods, flash floods, glacial lake outburst floods (GLOFs), droughts and heatwaves.

Among the key initiatives, the minister cited the Monsoon Strategic Plan 2026, prepared on the prime minister's directions in consultation with relevant federal and provincial institutions. The plan focuses on water storage and management, forecasting and early-warning systems, resilient infrastructure, floodplain protection and institutional coordination. The government is also developing the Pakistan Resilient Urban Policy Framework to promote better-planned, environmentally sustainable cities and address urban challenges, including heatwaves, air pollution, water scarcity, drainage and disaster risks.

Dr Khral said Pakistan had submitted three proposals to the Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage (FRLD) to address the economic and non-economic consequences of climate change.

The proposals include a recovery and systems-strengthening programme developed by the United Nations Development Programme, UNICEF and ACTED; a project submitted by the World Health Organisation and the United Nations Office for Project Services to strengthen climate-resilient health systems; and a Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government initiative seeking rehabilitation support for private fish farms and public-sector hatcheries damaged by flash floods.

The third proposal aims to revive

the aquaculture sector, particularly trout farming, and support affected communities. The minister described international climate financing as a limited opportunity, adding that Pakistan was not relying exclusively on foreign assistance to improve its resilience.

She said the government was preparing a National Drought Plan focused on early warning, sustainable land and water management, ecosystem restoration and the protection of vulnerable communities. The Pakistan Drought Management System, developed in collaboration with the International Water Management Institute and the Pakistan Meteorological Department, had also become operational to support near-real-time monitoring and forecasting.

Highlighting progress in disaster preparedness, she said 284 early-warning systems had been established across 24 vulnerable valleys in Gilgit-Baltistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa under the GLOF project and handed over to the Pakistan Meteorological Department.

The project also includes canal rehabilitation, slope stabilisation, flood-protection infrastructure, safe havens and community-based disaster management centres.

Other initiatives include the SAFER Pakistan project, which supports climate-risk information, water security and resilient livelihoods in Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Gilgit-Baltistan, and the Integrated Climate Risk Management Project, which is developing district-level monitoring and early-warning capacity through automated weather stations and river and water-level gauges.

The government is also promoting climate-resilient agriculture through new and upgraded agrometeorological stations under the initiative to transform the Indus Basin. Afforestation, urban forestry, rangeland management and ecosystem restoration are being pursued through the Upscaling Green Pakistan Project and provincial programmes.

For fiscal year 2026-27,

the Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination has been allocated Rs2,478 billion under the Public Sector Development Programme. The funding covers four ongoing projects related to afforestation, institutional capacity-building, green entrepreneurship and urban climate resilience.

On environmental protection, Dr Khral said the federal government formulated policies in consultation with the provinces, which adapted them to local circumstances. In Islamabad, traffic had been identified as the principal source of air pollution, while authorities were taking action against industrial units, construction sites, brick kilns and vehicles violating environmental standards.

She told the House that 12 industrial units had been issued notices before winter 2025, while another 18 marble-processing units were served notices over environmental violations. During winter 2025-26, notices were issued to 26 owners or managers of under-construction buildings.

All 33 brick kilns operating in Islamabad before winter 2025 had been converted to zigzag technology, although six were issued notices for failing to use the technology properly or burning substandard fuel. Three non-compliant kilns were demolished during winter 2025-26, with four more demolished in 2026. The Pakistan Environmental Protection Agency and Islamabad Capital Territory

administration also inspected 10,681 vehicles during winter 2025-26, fining 1,920 and impounding more than 100. Environmental laboratories certified by Pak-EPA inspected another 7,910 vehicles. ■■■■

Nusrat Bhutto symbol of courage: Acting Governor Awais



Acting Governor Sindh Syed Awais Qadir Shah has paid tribute to Begum Nusrat Bhutto on her 15th Death Anniversary.

He paid tribute to Begum Nusrat Bhutto for her struggle and sacrifices for democracy.

He said that Begum Nusrat Bhutto fought for democracy alongside Sheikh Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. The Acting Governor said that Begum Nusrat Bhutto was a symbol of courage and steadfastness in the struggle against dictatorship.

The title of Madane-Jamhooriyat (Mother of Democracy) is a recognition of Begum Nusrat Bhutto's remarkable contributions, he added.

Condolences with MPA Asif Musa: The Acting Governor visited the residence of Pakistan Peoples Party leader and Member of the Sindh Provincial Assembly, Muhammad Asif Musa, to offer condolences on the passing of his uncle, late Ismail Samoon, and his young nephew, late Idrees Ghani.

Senior Pakistan Peoples Party leader and Sindh Provincial Minister Saeed Ghani was also present on the occasion. The Acting Governor offered Fataha for the departed souls and prayed to Almighty Allah for their eternal peace, forgiveness, and elevation of ranks, as well as patience and strength for the bereaved family. ■■■■

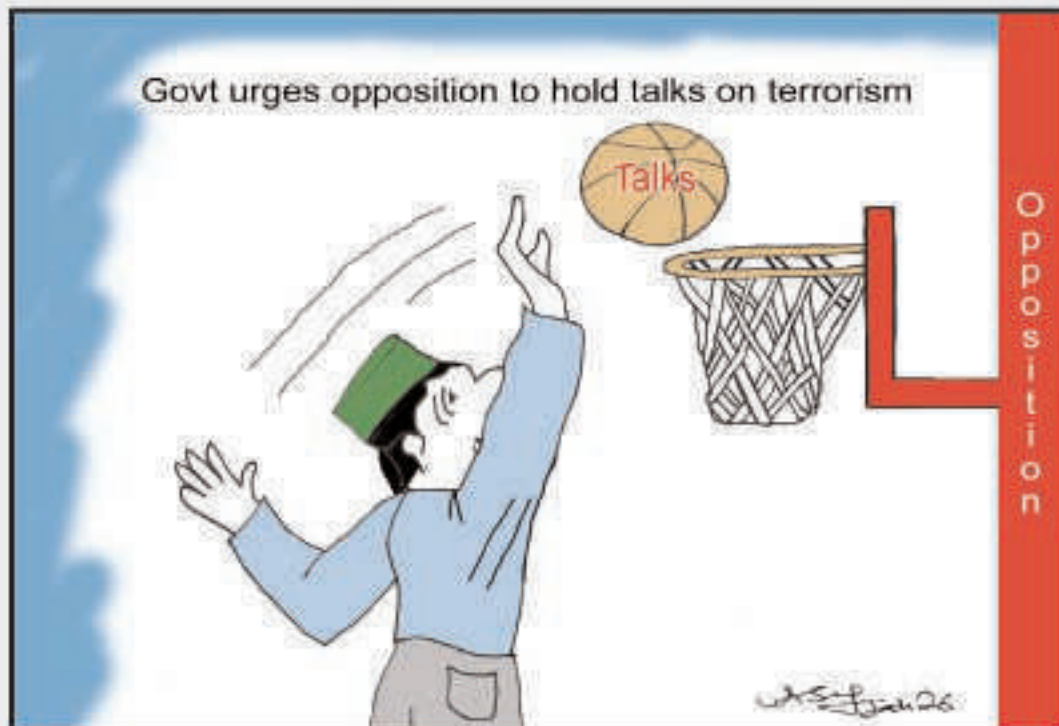
Hamza visits martyr Major Wajahat family

Punjab former Chief Minister Hamza Shehbaz Sharif visited the residence of martyred Major Wajahat Waheed here on Friday and offered condolences to the bereaved family.

He met the martyr's mother, brother, wife and other family members and expressed his heartfelt sympathies over the supreme sacrifice rendered by the army officer.

He said Major Wajahat Waheed had laid down his life while defending the motherland and performing his duties. He said brave sons of the nation like Major Wajahat Waheed were a source of pride and a precious national asset. The sacrifices of martyrs who gave their lives for the security of the country could never be forgotten, he added. Hamza said the families of martyrs deserved the highest respect and the entire nation shared their grief. ■■■■

EDITORIAL



Twenty Pakistan-Maldives accords can change path

Pakistan and the Maldives have agreed to deepen bilateral cooperation, signing 20 memorandums of understanding (MoUs) and setting a target of increasing bilateral trade to \$200 million within two years. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif announced the target on Wednesday during talks with Maldivian President Mohamed Muizzu in Islamabad, describing the agreements as an opportunity to turn decades of friendship into stronger economic, diplomatic and strategic ties. Muizzu's three-day visit, the first by a Maldivian president to Pakistan in 11 years, coincides with the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations established in 1966. Bilateral trade currently stands at about \$13.9 million, highlighting the scale of the ambition. The agreements cover defence, maritime security, information technology, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, healthcare, education, agriculture, fisheries, tourism and environmental protection. A Pakistan-Maldives Business Forum is expected to explore investment opportunities and strengthen commercial links. An agreement between the Maldives State Trading Organisation and the Trading Corporation of Pakistan will facilitate cooperation in agricultural commodities, food and other products. However, achieving the trade target will require sustained business engagement, better connectivity and effective implementation of the agreements rather than diplomatic commitments alone.

Technology, education and healthcare are expected to be central to the expanded partnership. Sharif offered Pakistan's expertise in information technology and data centres to support the Maldives' digital ambitions, while both sides agreed to promote cooperation in cybersecurity, digital skills and emerging technologies. The two countries also discussed expanding educational opportunities and professional training. Sharif noted that many Maldivian students were enrolled in Pakistani institutions, particularly in healthcare-related fields, while about 250 Pakistani doctors and paramedical professionals were working in the Maldives. Muizzu welcomed prospects for broader scholarships and placements in artificial intelligence, digitisation and healthcare. The agreements also include cooperation between police and civil service institutions, technical and vocational education, youth development and efforts to combat drug trafficking. Improved air connectivity could further support tourism, trade and people-to-people exchanges between the two countries. The breadth of the agreements reflects a shared desire to move beyond traditional diplomatic ties towards practical cooperation. Yet their significance will ultimately depend on implementation, measurable economic gains and tangible benefits for businesses and citizens.

Troubling waters of Persian Gulf

The Persian Gulf is edging towards a wider conflict as Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) Navy claims that seven vessels were hit in separate incidents in the Persian Gulf and near the Strait of Hormuz. According to the IRGC, four vessels allegedly involved in illegal oil transfers caught fire after being tracked by Iranian forces, while three others struck mines west of the strait. These claims have not been independently verified. Tehran has warned that continued American military pressure could trigger retaliation against US bases across the region. President Donald Trump, meanwhile, has ruled out negotiations with Iran while suggesting that a significant development in the conflict could emerge soon. He has claimed that Washington has defeated Iran militarily and economically, yet the continued confrontation and uncertainty over maritime security suggest that declaring victory is easier than securing peace. Trump's insistence that Iran must never acquire a nuclear weapon does not, by itself, justify an open-ended military campaign or the imposition of pressure without a credible diplomatic settlement. A naval blockade that threatens to widen the conflict risks destabilising international trade and aggravating an already volatile regional situation.

The danger is compounded by reports in The New York Times that American and Israeli military officials have developed plans for possible renewed strikes against Iran after the US midterm elections, although Trump has not necessarily approved the proposed operations. A White House official declined to comment on the reported plans. Meanwhile, an Iranian security official has warned that Tehran could target American political assets and infrastructure in countries involved in renewed hostilities if Iranian officials are assassinated or civilians killed. Such threats are serious, but they must also be understood against the backdrop of a confrontation in which military escalation has repeatedly undermined diplomatic prospects. Washington cannot credibly claim to seek regional stability while keeping the prospect of further attacks alive and maintaining coercive measures that risk provoking a wider war. Nor should the future of the region be reduced to a contest of military strength in which civilians, shipping and neighbouring economies bear the costs.

Unfinished Business of the Devolution of Power

Consider the scale. Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 7th Population and Housing Census 2023 recorded Punjab alone at nearly 128 million people. Sindh has more than 55 million and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa more than 40 million. These provinces contain regions with very different economies, geography, and social needs. A government may represent all of them, but administrative distance can still produce unequal access to attention and resources.

The same logic applies to health. Healthcare is experienced locally: whether a woman can reach a maternity facility, whether a district hospital has specialists, whether medicines are available and whether preventive programmes reflect local needs. Pakistan's 2024-25 household data still show urban-rural differences in reproductive health access. More manageable provincial systems could place planning, budgeting and specialised healthcare institutions closer to underserved populations.

Pakistan's current administrative structure struggles to effectively serve its 260 million citizens, with power remaining too concentrated and distant from local needs. Creating new, economically viable provinces would improve government responsiveness, particularly in essential sectors like education, healthcare, and gender representation. Rather than a threat to national unity, decentralising authority into smaller administrative units represents institutional maturity and better resource distribution for the common good.

"We will die before we let the province be divided." Variations of this sentiment increasingly surface whenever the question of new provinces is raised. Such slogans are politically powerful because they turn an administrative proposal into an existential question of identity and belonging. But a federation cannot govern itself through sentiment alone. There is a familiar metaphor for societies resisting change: when the road finally reaches the village, some stand in its path because the unfamiliar is easier to fear than to examine. The point is not that every proposed change constitutes progress, but that resistance itself cannot be treated as an argument against reform.

Perhaps the debate on new provinces has been asking the wrong question. The issue is not whether the country should be divided further, but whether power should remain concentrated so far from the citizens it is meant to serve.

Unfortunately, among the masses, the concept of federation has not evolved from the map of territory. In reality, it is also a map of access. It is access to power, public money, political representation, hospitals, universities and the institutions that shape everyday life. Pakistan's debate on creating new provinces should therefore move beyond the language of "division". The more important question is whether a country of around 260 million people can still be governed effectively through only four provinces. It is neither convincing nor humanely possible.

Pakistan has reached a point where creating more provinces should be treated not as a threat to national unity, but as an instrument of better government. We are not in the year 1947, when five provinces were enough (including East Pakistan).

Consider the scale. Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 7th Population and Housing Census 2023 recorded Punjab alone at nearly 128 million people. Sindh has more than 55 million and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa more than 40 million. These provinces contain regions with very different economies, geography, and social needs. A government may represent all of them, but administrative distance can still produce unequal access to attention and resources.

More provinces can reduce that distance. The case is important in education. Pakistan's household survey reports that 28% of children aged five to sixteen are out of school. Educational disadvantage is not evenly distributed. A smaller provincial unit can plan around its own teacher shortages, school distances, girls' enrolment and rural infrastructure rather than competing for attention within a provincial system. A new province would have its own education department, development priorities and political accountability.

When educational failure has a clearer institutional owner, it becomes harder to hide behind the averages of a large province.

The same logic applies to health. Healthcare is experienced locally: whether a woman can reach a maternity facility, whether a district hospital has specialists, whether medicines are available and whether preventive programmes reflect local needs. Pakistan's 2024-25 household data still show urban-rural differences in reproductive health access. More manageable provincial systems could place planning, budgeting and specialised healthcare institutions closer to underserved populations. The point is not that drawing a new boundary automatically builds a hospital. It is that it creates another centre with the authority and budget to decide that one should be built.

There is also a gender dimension that deserves more attention. Article 106 of the Constitution reserves seats for women in provincial assemblies. If that principle is carried into newly created provinces, provincial political centres can widen the space in which women enter legislatures, ministries, committees and public leadership. Representation is about multiplying the places from which leadership can emerge, for women from regions that remain politically peripheral. Constitutionally, the idea is neither alien nor revolutionary. Article 239 provides a route for altering provincial limits, while Article 140A establishes devolution of political, administrative and financial authority as a constitutional principle. More provinces can be understood as an extension of that logic. Power should travel closer to those affected by it. Whatever the road map for this novel initiative is, one aspect must be ensured: new provinces must be economically viable and administratively rational. They should not be created merely as ethnic rewards, electoral bargains or new layers of bureaucracy. Population, geography, revenue capacity, service-delivery gaps, infrastructure and public consent should determine their design. Strong local governments must accompany them, because decentralisation cannot simply stop at a new provincial capital.

The real argument, then, is not that smaller is always better. It is that government should exist at a scale at which citizens can meaningfully reach it, scrutinise it and influence it. Pakistan has changed dramatically while its provincial map has barely changed. Its population has expanded, cities have multiplied, and expectations of the state have grown. The architecture of government should evolve with that reality.

More provinces would not mean less Pakistan, nor would it erase your ethnic identity. Rather, it will give you more job opportunities and centers of representation and focus on grassroots issues. We will have more locally responsive education and healthcare, more political participation and a shorter distance between a citizen and the state.

At this stage of Pakistan's development, that is not fragmentation. It is institutional maturity. It is not division of land; it is distribution of resources. As a nation, we have to understand that it is time to move on and let go of the things that do not serve the common good.



SAEEDA USMANI

The writer is a researcher and analyst of international relations.

Artificial Intelligence: Opportunity Or Threat?

Artificial intelligence has quickly changed from an idea into a strong force moving society from simple things like virtual assistants and recommendation systems to advanced systems that can write, design, code, and analyze information. Artificial intelligence is changing the way people live and the way people work. Companies use technologies to become better at what they do and to be more productive. A big question that comes up is: Is intelligence creating new opportunities, or is it taking away jobs and making the economy less stable? While it is true that there are worries about losing jobs, history and what is happening now suggest that artificial intelligence is more likely to make work better than to take it away completely. The problem is not about controlling technology but about making sure that workers, companies, and governments can change and fit into the situation.

Throughout history, new technology has often made people worry about losing their jobs. During the Industrial Revolution, machines started to do the work that people used to do, and workers were scared about their jobs. Similar worries happened when computers, automation, and the internet came into use. Even though these technologies changed old industries, they also created new areas and new jobs. Following a pattern, some jobs may disappear or become less important, but new ones are coming up that require skills in building, managing, and working with systems. One of these is artificial



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cial intelligence and its ability to make work more efficient. Companies can automate tasks so workers can focus on more creative, important, and personal work. For example, artificial intelligence can look at a lot of information in seconds, helping people make choices in health care.

Artificial intelligence can help doctors diagnose illnesses accurately, and in finance it can find fraud and look at market trends. In education, tools powered by intelligence help create a learning experience that fits each person instead of replacing teachers. These tools often make their work

better. Help them do better jobs. Also, artificial intelligence is creating kinds of jobs. There is a need for data scientists, machine learning engineers, people who look at the ethics of artificial intelligence, cybersecurity experts, and people who help companies change how they work. Countries need people to build, check, and improve intelligence systems. In addition, industries that support structures like cloud computing and information management are growing fast. These changes show that technology can create jobs even as it changes the way people work.

There is an upside, but we should not ignore the real problems that artificial intelligence brings. Unlike technologies that mainly affected people doing physical jobs, artificial intelligence can automate and replace tasks that people in office jobs do. Customer service workers, accountants, translators, and even some people who create content may find that part of their work is done by machines. This makes people worried about

losing their jobs for workers whose skills are connected to regular tasks. The effect of intelligence will not be the same for everyone; people with higher education and special skills may be in more demand, while those in jobs that follow a pattern may have more problems. If governments and companies do not help workers who lose their jobs and have trouble changing, existing gaps in wealth could get bigger.

Moving into jobs without having access to learning, training, and changing skills means that the future of work will depend not just on new technology but also on how well society prepares people for change. Economic security is another thing to worry about; if artificial intelligence makes many jobs disappear in some areas, people may spend money, which affects the whole economy. Jobs are one of the ways people get money

and feel safe. If changes happen fast without enough help, unemployment could go up. Experts in economic problems must think about how to deal with automation, including programs that help workers learn new skills, safety nets, and rules that help everyone grow together. At the same time, fear that artificial intelligence will take most jobs may get worse when companies use parts of human abilities that machines can't copy, like creativity, feelings, making choices, leading, and building relationships.

These abilities are still very important in areas like health care, teaching, helping people, managing, and art. Even though artificial intelligence can process information and do tasks, it does not have the real-life experiences and understanding needed for parts of work and personal life. So the best workers in the future will probably be those who

mix skills with special human skills. Companies also have a duty in shaping the future of work. Instead of seeing artificial intelligence just as a way to save money on workers, businesses should focus on using it to make people better. Companies that spend on training their workers can create chances for them. To change, we are more likely to see results.

When people and artificial intelligence work together, it can make work better. Keep jobs meaningful. For example, artificial intelligence can help customer service workers by giving them answers, letting the workers focus on solving hard problems and making good relationships with customers. Schools, colleges, and training places need to teach students skills that will help them in life. These places should focus on thinking, being able to change, using computers, solving problems, and learning all the time. These skills will help people stay strong as industries keep changing. Governments and companies should also make it easier for workers to get training so they can move into new jobs. In the end, the discussion about intelligence and how it affects work is still going on.

Work should not be seen as a friend in the fight between technology and artificial intelligence. AI is not a good answer to economic problems. How it affects people depends on how society decides to use and control it. If it is used well, artificial intelligence can help improve ideas, work, create new businesses, and make life better. But if it is not taken care of or controlled, it could make things unequal and cause people to lose jobs. The economy be unstable. The future of work is not a fight between people and machines. A way of changing and adjusting that will change what work means. The big challenge is making sure that the good parts of intelligence are available to many people, not just a few. This can be done by putting money into learning, helping workers change jobs, and making rules.



OPINION

DTM



LAHORE: Man sells artificial birds' nests from his bicycle on city streets. ONLINE

Increasing Gender-Based Violence Cases

Our society has now become comfortable with hearing a new case daily and moving to a new headline the next day. These names, Aizal, Kalsoom, Muntaha, Ayat, and Hina, are not just news; they were real humans. Their families have to suffer a lot; even society will forget to talk about them. They will reason that many parents will take extra care of their daughters. Reading and sharing such stories is not enough; we need to ask questions in our homes, streets, and at police stations until we reach better answers.

A recurring wave of horrific gender-based violence—from toddler Aizal Ali to Hina Javed—exposes systemic failures across Pakistan. Most perpetrators are trusted relatives rather than strangers, while extrajudicial police encounters bypass real investigations, leaving broader networks unpunished. Combatting this crisis requires moving beyond social media outrage toward actionable steps: active parental vigilance, restricted access to violent online content, robust local community safety, and meaningful judicial reform with functional emergency response systems.

This summer, Pakistan has passed through multiple gender-based violence cases, with a little pause in between. Several unreported cases, perhaps, fill the gap. From an 18-month-old toddler, Aizal Ali, to a married Hina Javed. The same fear came out of different ages, different times, and different cities: are our children safe?

Weeks before Aizal's case in June 2026, a three-year-old Kalsoom was abducted outside her home in Karachi, and her body was found packed in a sack near her home. Her own relatives accused her. In the same month, Muntaha Zahra, just seven years old, suffered the same fate. In Sargodha, she went to a shop to buy sugar. Her dead body was found on the rooftop of the same shop. She was raped and killed. The suspect was killed in a police encounter.

In August 2026, Aizal was just eighteen months old when she was taken by a trusted relative from her home in Karachi and returned severely injured. Medical reports discovered signs of sexual abuse. While people were still protesting for Aizal, another child, Ayat Noor, five years old, went missing for fifteen days in Haripur. Even her father circulated a video appealing for his daughter. She was also a victim of sexual assault, and her body was found in a well near her house.

Another seven-year-old girl, Dua, was taken away, hurt, and killed in Karachi. Her culprit was also dead by police. Recently, a married woman, Hina Javed, was brutally killed by her husband. Her dead body was found in her bathroom in Rawalpindi. Her husband, a former NUST professor, along with his maid and father, planned her murder.

The news coverage of these stories is more about fear, and that is real, but a consistent pattern is noted behind these cases. The first thing is the culprit, who is not a stranger in most cases but a relative. Parents were used to warning

their children about outsiders and strangers, but these cases exposed a different aspect.

Secondly, killing the culprit in a police encounter at the moment seems like justice, but it ends justice before it begins. Without any trial, a suspect was shot dead, leaving all other involved culprits free to live. Real justice needs proper investigation, not one killing that closes the case.

The third most important part of this discussion is the unfettered internet use. It is the fact that sexual and violent content is easily accessible all over the internet. There is almost no restriction on this content that has influenced society's behaviour. Smartphones are available everywhere with no real control over abusive and violent content, which is shaping people's mindsets. We cannot take this as the only reason for excusing such cases; however, it also needs to be a part of the conversation.

Now what is our responsibility? It is not enough to be angry and only demand justice. We should turn this anger into some action. Parents should create awareness among their children regarding their bodies, inappropriate touch, and make them comfortable enough to share anything. They also need to be careful about the behaviours of close relatives who spend more time with their children. Moreover, they should monitor the content their children or any family member is watching and have open conversations about such topics. Communities should play an active role by installing CCTV cameras.

There is a need for improvement in our justice system. Alert systems such as Zainab Alert must be working instead of just being announced in the media. The approach of killing suspects in encounters should be ended so that families get satisfaction over justice through proper investigation and court trial.

Our society has now become comfortable with hearing a new case daily and moving to a new headline the next day. These names, Aizal, Kalsoom, Muntaha, Ayat, and Hina, are not just news; they were real humans. Their families have to suffer a lot; even society will forget to talk about them. They will reason that many parents will take extra care of their daughters. Reading and sharing such stories is not enough; we need to ask questions in our homes, streets, and at police stations until we reach better answers.



MARIAM JABEEN

Mariam Jabeen is a researcher with an academic background in gender studies.

Letters To The EDITOR

Clean Punjab needs responsible citizens

The Punjab government's Clean Punjab campaign is an important step towards improving sanitation and making cities cleaner. The initiative aims to address the long-standing problem of waste collection and disposal, which has affected public health and the urban environment. However, the success of this campaign will depend not only on government policies and private waste management companies but also on the behaviour of ordinary citizens.

For years, poor waste management has remained a challenge in many cities across Punjab. Municipal authorities have struggled to maintain cleanliness, resulting in rubbish accumulating on roads, in neighbourhoods and in public spaces. The government's decision to involve private companies in waste management is an attempt to improve the collection and disposal of garbage. Such arrangements can help improve services, provided that companies are properly monitored and held accountable.

However, keeping cities clean requires more than regular waste collection. Citizens also have a responsibility to dispose of rubbish properly. In many places, people throw garbage on roads or leave it beside waste bins instead of putting it inside them. Such behaviour creates unnecessary problems for sanitation workers and weakens the impact of government efforts. This reflects a wider problem of civic responsibility. Education alone does not guarantee responsible behaviour. People may understand the importance of cleanliness but still fail to follow basic rules in public places. Changing these habits requires continuous awareness, practical guidance and consistent enforcement of sanitation regulations.

The Punjab government should therefore make public education an important part of the Clean Punjab campaign. Schools, colleges, universities and local communities can help promote responsible waste disposal. Television, newspapers, radio and social media can also be used to explain how littering harms the environment and creates health risks.

Public awareness campaigns should encourage people to use designated bins, separate recyclable materials where facilities are available and avoid dumping waste in streets, drains and open spaces. Local authorities should ensure that bins are accessible and that collected rubbish is removed regularly. Citizens are more likely to cooperate when sanitation services are reliable and convenient. At the same time, the government must monitor the performance of private waste management companies. Outsourcing public services does not remove the government's responsibility to ensure quality, transparency and accountability. Complaints about missed collections and neglected areas should be addressed promptly.

Enforcement also has a role to play. Those who repeatedly violate waste disposal rules should face appropriate penalties, while communities that maintain clean surroundings can be encouraged through local recognition programmes.

The Clean Punjab campaign deserves public support, but its long-term success depends on a partnership between the government, service providers and citizens. Cleanliness should not be treated as the responsibility of sanitation workers alone. Every resident contributes to the condition of the streets, parks and neighbourhoods they share.

FAIZA ALI
Lahore

Pakistan must address its brain drain

Pakistan is facing a growing challenge as increasing numbers of educated and skilled professionals leave the country in search of better opportunities abroad. Doctors, engineers, information technology specialists and teachers are among those seeking improved salaries, professional growth and greater stability overseas. This continuing brain drain is more than the departure of individuals; it represents a significant loss of human capital that Pakistan needs to strengthen its economy, improve public services and build effective institutions.

When skilled professionals leave, the country loses not only their expertise but also the time and resources invested in their education and training. Shortages of qualified workers can place additional pressure on hospitals, educational institutions, businesses and other essential sectors. The departure of experienced professionals may also weaken innovation and reduce the capacity of local industries to compete internationally.

Several factors contribute to this trend. Limited employment opportunities, inadequate wages, uncertain career prospects and concerns about professional security encourage many talented people to seek a future elsewhere. For young graduates, the prospect of a better standard of living and a merit-based working environment can make migration particularly attractive. Simply urging them to remain in Pakistan will not resolve these underlying problems.

The government must therefore adopt practical measures to retain talent. Creating decent jobs, improving salaries, promoting merit-based recruitment and providing transparent career pathways should be among its priorities. Investment in research, technology, education and entrepreneurship can help create an environment where skilled individuals can use their abilities productively. Overseas Pakistanis can contribute to national development through investment, knowledge-sharing and professional collaboration. Policies that encourage their participation could help turn migration into an opportunity for cooperation rather than a permanent loss. Pakistan's young population is one of its greatest assets, but that potential cannot be realised without meaningful opportunities at home. Retaining talent requires more than patriotic appeals; it demands better governance, economic stability and respect for merit. If Pakistan wants its brightest minds to contribute to its future, it must give them compelling reasons to stay.

ZAHRA FIDA
Saudi Arabia

Secondly, killing the culprit in a police encounter at the moment seems like justice, but it ends justice before it begins. Without any trial, a suspect was shot dead, leaving all other involved culprits free to live. Real justice needs proper investigation, not one killing that closes the case.



Every New Majority Creates a New Minority

Pakistan has too little in place to deal with this. The Constitution recognizes the rights of citizens with distinct languages and cultures to preserve and promote them, but there is no comparable system of reserved representation for linguistic minorities in provincial legislatures, nor a strong framework for protecting them when the provincial majority changes.

Pakistan's current administrative structure struggles to effectively serve its 260 million citizens, with power remaining too concentrated and distant from local needs. Creating new, economically viable provinces would improve government responsiveness, particularly in essential sectors like education, healthcare, and gender representation. Rather than a threat to national unity, decentralizing authority into smaller administrative units represents institutional maturity and better resource distribution for the common good.

Federalism exists on several planes simultaneously. A boundary that creates a majority in one area creates a minority at the same time.

The most powerful argument for a reorganization of Pakistan's map is an ethical one. The Saraiki speaker in Rajanpur has rarely had a government which views his language as anything but a dialect. Karachi and Hyderabad contain a significant portion of the population of Sindh and, as MQM-P contends, accordingly have little control over issues of water, sanitation, and waste. To these groups, a new province offers not a clean-up but the possibility of a first majority.

This argument merits scrutiny rather than praise, because federalism exists on several planes simultaneously.

Consider the South Punjab idea in its most generous interpretation. Draw the line, and there is a Saraiki-speaking province. In it, right away, are Punjabi settlers of the canal colonies,

Urdu-speaking urbanites of Multan and Bahawalpur, Balochis of the western districts, and migrants in the cities. Yesterday, they were part of a provincial majority. Today, they are minorities in a province created to respond to somebody else's call for identity. Everything that has happened is simply a change in their relative position, which, in politics, is all that really counts.

The mirror image works no matter where the line is drawn. Split Sindh, and you get a predominantly urban province where Sindhis are minorities, and another, rural one, where Urdu-speakers are. Separate Hazara, and the Hindko-Pashto ratio is inverted in opposite directions at the same time. Every boundary defines not one category of people, but two.

Pakistan has too little in place to deal with this. The Constitution recognizes the rights of citizens with distinct languages and cultures to preserve and promote them, but there is no comparable system of reserved representation for linguistic minorities in provincial legislatures, nor a strong framework for protecting them when the provincial majority changes. The 18th Amendment distributed much power to the provinces while Article 140-A required provinces to devolve political, administrative and financial authority to elected local governments. In practice, that devolution remains weak. We have the base, but we lack the railings.

The interior minister understands the threat.

He says new administrative boundaries will have to emerge through a consensus process and not be imposed. He also says identities would not be affected. Mustafa Kamal makes the same argument. He says the demand is not directed against Sindhis. He also insists that no territory will be transferred between the provinces.

Both assertions may be honest, but they are not enough. Intention is not a barrier. A boundary drawn for administrative purposes creates the same demographic mathematics as one drawn for ethnic reasons. The map is agnostic about the purpose behind it.

The reaction in Sindh provides the perfect example. This month, its provincial assembly adopted a resolution against the division of the province. The chief minister pointed to a long series of prior resolutions opposing division, dating back decades. When a demand is framed administratively but perceived existentially, the framing has already failed.

The comparative evidence is revealing, even if inconsistent. Ethnicity became constitutionalized as the organizing logic of the Ethiopian federation; territory became identity, identity became entitlement, and movement became a security issue, contributing to the outbreak of civil war. Belgium accommodates its linguistic groups territorially so extensively that the country is regularly left without a functioning government for months because of the unresolved problem of Brussels, where the logic of territorial arrangement breaks down. Spain recognizes autonomy for its historic nationalities and discovers that autonomy does not necessarily resolve the nationalisms it was intended to accommodate. Nigeria, in turn, divided itself from three to thirty-six states in an attempt to achieve a more balanced ethnic equation, only to end up with states that struggle financially and minorities

whose grievances have often been reproduced at a smaller scale.

Despite their differences, the message from these examples is unambiguous: territorial recognition does not resolve the minority problem. It fragments it.

This is not an argument for rejecting the claims of communities that have been administered as afterthoughts for seventy-nine years. The dismissal of their claims as ethnic mischief, which has been Islamabad's practice for decades, is precisely how grievances turn into movements.

But recognition without guarantees simply moves the problem elsewhere.

The guarantees therefore have to be incorporated into any amendment redrawing the map. This means language rights for whichever community ends up as the minority in the new province; meaningful representation for minorities in the provincial assembly; an anti-discrimination clause protecting communities from discriminatory provincial policies; and strong local governments in areas with concentrated minorities, so that the community outvoted at the provincial level can still exercise meaningful authority where it actually lives.

And this is the guarantee nobody wants.

What enables a minority to be a minority without being powerless is functioning local government under Article 140-A. That reform has been on the books since 2010. It has never been fully implemented - not because the mechanism is unclear, but because meaningful devolution would dilute the very provincial power that new-province advocates and provincial defenders alike are fighting over.

Perhaps that is the real question Pakistan should ask before drawing another line on the map: not who gets to become the majority, but what happens to everyone who does not.



MOHAMIN ZEESHAN

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NATIONAL

DTM

Balochistan needs smaller units for better governance: Bugti

Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti has said that the province needs smaller administrative units, including new divisions and districts, alongside the creation of new provinces, to ensure easier public access to civil administration and government departments.

Addressing a press conference in North Dera Bugti on Friday, the chief minister announced that all divisional posts for the newly established Koh-e-Suleman Division had been approved and that officers and staff would be appointed shortly.

He said the establishment of smaller administrative units was essential to bring government services closer to the people and ensure effective governance at the grassroots level.

Sarfraz Bugti noted that while debates on creating smaller administrative units had

recently gained momentum across the country, the Balochistan government had begun working on the initiative two years ago, taking into account the province's unique geographical conditions and public needs.

The chief minister said the administrative structure must be organized in a manner that enables state institutions and the civil administration to remain close to the public, reducing the difficulties faced by citizens in accessing government services and resolving official matters. Speaking about Rakhni, which serves as the headquarters of Koh-e-Suleman Division, Bugti said the government was taking concrete steps to transform it into a model division and a symbol of development. He remarked that Rakhni should have been granted divisional status much earlier, but added that the development process had now begun in earnest.

He emphasized that strict directions had been issued to keep development projects in Rakhni free from corruption and commission-based practices. According to the chief minister, the Communications and Works Department is directly implementing development schemes to ensure transparency and accountability.

"Our objective is to develop Rakhni into a model division where projects are completed in a transparent manner and the benefits reach the people," he said.

Referring to a recent terrorist incident in Gwadar, the chief minister praised security forces for thwarting an attempt to target a construction company's building. He commended the sacrifices and operations of the Pakistan Army, Frontier Corps and police in the fight against terrorism in Balochistan. Bugti said a decline in terrorist incidents in the province since August was a positive development and reflected the continuous efforts of security forces. He stressed that operations against terrorism must continue and expressed hope that Balochistan would ultimately be freed from the menace of terrorism. **NEWS DESK**

Pakistan opposes India's bid for permanent UN Security Council seat

Pakistan has reaffirmed its opposition to the push by the 'Group of Four' bloc — India, Brazil, Germany and Japan — for permanent membership of the UN Security Council, and advocated instead for expansion of elected non-permanent category to make the 15-member body more representative and effective.

With conflicts multiplying, the Acting Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the UN, Ambassador Usman Jadoon, told the UN General Assembly that the Security Council's inability to respond effectively underscores the importance of reform for more effective maintenance of international peace and security.

In this regard, the Pakistani envoy identified the main impediments to restructuring the Council in order to make it more effective, representative and accountable. "Permanent membership and veto", he said, "have contributed to the Council's paralysis and inability to respond effectively to threats to international peace and security."

"Expanding the permanent

category, with or without veto, would entrench inequality rather than democratize the Council," the Pakistani envoy told the 193-member Assembly.

"Pakistan therefore opposes the creation of additional individual permanent seats."

Instead, Ambassador Jadoon added, "An expansion of the elected, non-permanent category, based on fair rotation through regular elections can provide more democratic and inclusive path forward."

Full-scale negotiations to reform the Security Council began in the

the Security Council remains blocked as the "Group of Four" block continues its campaign for permanent seats in the Council, while the Italy/Pakistan-led Uniting for Consensus (UFC) group opposes any additional permanent members, arguing it would create "new centers of privilege".

As a compromise, UFC has proposed a new category of members — not permanent members — with longer duration in terms and a possibility to get re-elected.

The Security Council is currently composed of five permanent members — Britain, China, France, Russia and the United

States — and 10 non-permanent members elected to two-year terms. In his remarks, the Pakistani envoy highlighted the principal obstacle to agreement is the insistence of a "few states" on acquiring permanent seats and their unwillingness for a compromise. "Instead of a reform for all,

they seek privilege for some," Ambassador Jadoon said, warning that this runs counter to the principle of sovereign equality and remains the biggest roadblock to reform. The Intergovernmental Negotiations (IGN) process, he said, remains the legitimate, inclusive and member-state-driven reform mechanism, which must give the necessary time and space to broaden the areas of convergence and reduce divergences under the five clusters.

The Pakistani envoy said UFC's proposal for more non-permanent members was designed to accommodate the legitimate interests of all member states and regions. "Each region could, however, be assigned longer-term seats, including possibility of re-election."

The historic injustice against Africa, which at present has no permanent seat, must be redressed, he said. Similarly, adequate representation of the underrepresented regions and groups, such as Asia-Pacific, as well as the cross-regional groupings, including Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), have to be catered for as well. "Reform must correct existing inequalities, not reproduce them; broaden representation, not concentrate privilege; and strengthen multilateralism, not entrench national advantage. Reform for all, privilege for none," Ambassador Jadoon said in conclusion. **NEWS DESK**



General Assembly in February 2009 on five key areas — the categories of membership, the question of veto, regional representation, size of an enlarged Council, and working methods of the Council and its relationship with the General Assembly.

Progress towards restructuring

States — and 10 non-permanent members elected to two-year terms.

In his remarks, the Pakistani envoy highlighted the principal obstacle to agreement is the insistence of a "few states" on acquiring permanent seats and their unwillingness for a compromise. "Instead of a reform for all,

Five arrested in kidney transplant racket

The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) Islamabad Zone has busted an organised illegal kidney transplant racket, arrested five suspects and frozen properties worth Rs 87.5 million following a joint operation with the Human Organ Transplant Authority (HOTA) in a Society, Islamabad.

An FIA official told APP on Friday that the Anti-Corruption Circle Islamabad conducted the raid and arrested three suspects on the spot, while two others were arrested later. A court granted seven-day physical remand of the arrested suspects.

He said the agency also recovered Rs 1 million in cash, seized three vehicles and sealed the illegal transplant facility. During the investigation, it was revealed that a kidney belonging to donor Ramzan Arshad had allegedly been transplanted into recipient, Muhammad Qasim against a payment of Rs 3 million.

The official said agents had arranged the donor and promised him Rs 400,000, of which Rs 340,000 was to be paid to the donor, while Rs 60,000 was to be shared among three agents as commission.

He said the suspects were allegedly carrying out kidney transplants in residential houses without the required medical qualifications or approval.

The investigation revealed that the group arranged medical tests, including tissue typing, cross-matching, FRA and HLA tests, through agents at a hospital.

To avoid detection, the suspects allegedly used fake referral letters and submitted donor samples under the names of relatives of kidney recipients to make the transplants appear legally approved.

The official said dialysis services were arranged through a hospital technician in Islamabad, while patients developing complications after transplantation were referred to another hospital. He said the network allegedly included agents, a doctor, a nurse, an anaesthesia provider, medicine suppliers and individuals arranging laboratory tests and dialysis services. The group had reportedly operated from private locations and Peshawar.

Giving details of the financial investigation, the official said the suspects had allegedly purchased expensive properties in Islamabad using money earned through illegal kidney transplants.

One suspect purchased a 10-marla house in Media Town for Rs 62.5 million, while another bought a five-marla house in Jinnah Garden Phase 1 for Rs 25 million.

He said the transfer of both properties, worth a total of Rs 87.5 million, had been frozen through notices issued under Section 5 of the FIA Act, 1974. Letters had also been sent to banks to obtain the financial records of the suspects, while separate money laundering proceedings against two suspects were under consideration.

The official said three vehicles, including a Changan Oshan X7 and two Honda Civics, were seized, while their transfer and registration had been frozen through the relevant excise authorities.

Teams from HOTA, the Islamabad Healthcare Regulatory Authority (IHRA) and the Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan (DRAP) also inspected the illegal facility and would submit separate reports.

The operation was conducted on the directions of the Director FIA Islamabad Zone under the supervision of the Deputy Director, Anti-Corruption Circle Islamabad.

The FIA team included Sub-Inspectors Tabish Javed, Shehryar and Ehtisham Gondal, Assistant Sub-Inspector Sohail Ahmed and LFC Rubab. HOTA officials Sardar Adil and Hina Kanwal also participated in the operation.

The official said raids were continuing at different locations to arrest the remaining nominated suspects.

A case was registered under FIR No. 60/2026, dated October 15, 2026, under Sections 9, 10 and 11(a)(ii) of the Transplantation of Human Organs and Tissues Act, 2010, along with Sections 34, 419 and 109 of the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC).

Further investigation was underway. **NEWS DESK**

Aurangzeb calls for stronger disaster preparedness



Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, here on Friday held a meeting with Lieutenant General Inam Haider Malik, outgoing Chairman of the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), alongside Lieutenant General Hasan Khattak, incoming Chairman of the authority, to discuss disaster preparedness, climate resilience and strengthening Pakistan's capacity to manage climate-related risks. The minister highlighted climate change and population growth as Pakistan's two existential challenges, with far-reaching implications for economic stability, food security, communities and public finances.

He noted that during the recent IMF-World Bank Annual Meetings, climate change and its implications for Pakistan featured in discussions with international partners, underscoring the importance of strengthening national preparedness and effective risk management.

Aurangzeb emphasized the importance of translating forecasting into timely decisions and effective early-warning measures.

He highlighted the importance of mobilising resources for disaster preparedness and climate resilience

through effective use of domestic resources and engagement with international development partners.

The discussion emphasized prioritizing investments and developing practical, implementable projects to strengthen resilience, improve preparedness and deliver measurable outcomes.

The Finance Minister appreciated Lieutenant General Inam Haider Malik's contributions during his tenure as NDMA Chairman and acknowledged the importance of institutional continuity in strengthening Pakistan's disaster management framework. He also conveyed his best wishes to Lieutenant General Hasan Khattak as he assumes responsibility for leading the Authority. He underscored the need to ensure continuity of expertise and strengthen institutional capacity to support long-term climate adaptation, mitigation and disaster risk management.

On the occasion, Lieutenant General Inam Haider Malik briefed the Finance Minister on Pakistan's long-range climate forecasting system, which can provide outlooks up to 12 months ahead, and ongoing efforts to further enhance its capabilities.

The discussion also highlighted the importance of integrating long-range forecasts with shorter-term mon-

itoring by the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) and other relevant agencies to ensure timely communication and action for vulnerable communities.

The NDMA leadership also outlined initiatives relating to the Global Resilience Hub and the Next Generation Technologies initiative, aimed at helping shift Pakistan from a reactive disaster-response model towards proactive, technology-driven risk reduction.

These initiatives could facilitate knowledge-sharing, demonstrate Pakistan's forecasting capabilities and support greater engagement with international partners.

The meeting highlighted the importance of building sustainable national expertise in climate science and forecasting, supported by clear institutional ownership, structured training and specialised technical personnel. The meeting reaffirmed the importance of strengthening Pakistan's capacity to anticipate climate-related risks and advance preparedness, adaptation and mitigation through effective coordination, technology and sustainable financing, protecting lives, livelihoods and the economy. **NEWS DESK**

Pakistani artist wins at global Folk Gifts Design Contest

A cross-cultural design blending Pakistani and Chinese folk traditions has earned international recognition in Shanghai, highlighting the role of creative collaboration in fostering people-to-people exchanges.

Hira Ali, a Pakistani artist, received a Cultural Exchange Award at the 4th ISFS Award of the International Folk Gifts Innovative Design Contest for her work "Folk Hues: Kalash and Jinshan Color Fusion." The contest, hosted by the Shanghai Fashion and Accessories Society, held its final evaluation meeting on October 19 at Donghua University. Her tutor, Wu Pengxiao from Shanghai University, received an Excellent Tutor Award.

The competition, themed "Algorithm," used baseball caps, scarves, T-shirts, and socks as design carriers, encouraging domestic and international students at Chinese universities to explore and interpret folk cultural elements from around the world. Through their designs, participants were invited to express the fashion essence of diverse local folk cultures and jointly build a more inclusive, green and intelligent future, China Economic Net reported.

Hira Ali's award-winning design fuses Pakistani Kalash elements with Shanghai Jinshan Farmer Paintings. The Kalash, a small indigenous people of Pakistan's Chitral region, retain ancient folk beliefs, Kalasha language and distinctive embroidered dress, and their Suri Jagok astronomical practice was inscribed by UNESCO in 2018 as an intangible heritage in need of urgent preservation.

Celebrated for their bold compositions and vibrant colors, the Jinshan Farmer Paintings, which emerged in Shanghai's Jinshan district in the late 1950s, gained international recognition after an exhibition at the National Art Museum of China in 1980, and are now recognized as Shanghai's municipal intangible cultural heritage.

"I selected Kalash civilization as creative inspiration for its authentic, distinctive folk textile motifs, transforming this indigenous heritage into modern apparel design to showcase unique tribal charm," Hira Ali said. The cross-cultural fusion aims to highlight Shanghai's intangible heritage while integrating international folk aesthetics. Though geographically and culturally distinct, both arts share the same core aesthetic of vibrant, high-contrast, life-driven color palettes rooted in local daily life and natural landscapes. **NEWS DESK**

Pakistan, Kyrgyzstan keen to protect snow leopards

Pakistan and the Kyrgyz Republic have emphasized the need for joint efforts to protect snow leopards and their mountain habitats, with officials calling for stronger international cooperation, community participation and measures to address the impacts of climate change.

The message was highlighted at an event marking International Snow Leopard Day at FAST-NUCES (Foundation for Advancement of Science and Technology-National University of Computer and Emerging Sciences) Islamabad on Friday, organized by the Snow Leopard Foundation Pakistan in collaboration with the Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination and the university.

Kyrgyzstan's Chiege Affairs in Islamabad, Aibek Tiegabaliyev said both countries shared a commitment to protect-

ing their mountain natural heritage and snow leopards, stressing that conservation efforts should also support the well-being of communities living in mountain regions.

He said the Kyrgyz Republic had hosted the secretariat of the Global Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Protection Programme (GSLEP) in Bishkek since 2014, facilitating cooperation among snow leopard range countries and international partners. Additional Secretary of the Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination Aamir Mohiuddin said International Snow Leopard Day underscored the importance of global cooperation and shared responsibility for protecting the endangered species.

He said 12 snow leopard range countries had adopted the Bishkek Declaration

on October 23, 2013, while the United Nations declared October 23 as International Snow Leopard Day in 2024.

He stressed the need to protect snow leopard habitats and wildlife corridors, prevent illegal hunting and wildlife trafficking, and strengthen scientific research and measures to address climate change.

Inspector General of Forests Dr Syed Moazzam Nizami said climate change was creating new challenges for snow leopards and mountain ecosystems. He emphasized the sustainable use of water and natural resources, along with stronger institutional capacity and partnerships to implement Pakistan's environmental commitments.

The event also featured electronic posters prepared by students on environ-

mental challenges, particularly threats to wildlife, and a short film highlighting risks to snow leopard populations and Pakistan's role in their conservation. **NEWS DESK**



NATIONAL

DTM

LPG shortage worsens after border closure, traders say

The closure of two key border crossings between Pakistan and Iran has halted liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) imports into Pakistan, causing shortages and driving up prices, traders said.

The Gabb-Rimdan and Taftan crossings were closed on October 17, with Pakistan and Iran giving different reasons for the move. The Balochistan government, in the Pakistani province where the crossings are located, said the temporary closure was intended to address security concerns and curb smuggling, while Iran's foreign ministry cited technical issues.

Pakistan imports about 7,000 metric tons of LPG a day from Iran, according to the Pakistan LPG Association. More than 4,000 tons a day enters through Gabb-Rimdan alone, said Shamsul Haq, former president of the Gwadar Chamber of Commerce and Industry. "These imports are at halt," Haq said.

He added that more than 1,000 Pakistani containers carrying potatoes, bananas and rice for Iran were also stranded. However, the Gabb-Rimdan crossing reopened on Wednesday for Pakistani exports of perishable goods. Traders said the price of a 12 kg LPG cylinder had risen to 7,000 Pakistani rupees (\$25) from 4,500 rupees (\$16) within days and could climb further if the disruptions persist.

Hundreds of trucks, including LPG tankers, are stranded on both sides of the border, Haq said. The Quetta Chamber of Commerce and Industry has advised members to stop placing new orders with Iran until further notice. Truck drivers stuck at the crossings said they had been waiting for days in harsh conditions with limited access to basic amenities.

"We have been standing here for over a week waiting for the border to open," said Abdul Ghani Baloch, one affected driver.

Pakistan-Iran trade totalled about \$2.8 billion in the 2023-24 fiscal year, including roughly \$684 million of Pakistani exports, according to the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry.

Pakistan LPG Association Chairman Irfan Khokhar warned shortages and price increases could worsen.

"Already, LPG is being sold at different prices in Pakistan," he said.

A 12 kg cylinder sells for about 7,000 rupees in Balochistan, 7,500 rupees in Lahore and 8,200 rupees in Skardu, he said, adding that higher LPG prices were feeding through to other goods.

Lahore resident Farhat Abbas said he paid 250 rupees per kg for LPG before the border closure but now pays 500-600 rupees per kg.

Consumers fear shortages and rising prices could worsen as winter approaches. Pakistan's army chief visited Tehran this week and discussed border issues with Iranian leaders. Iran's foreign ministry said consultations on resuming trade were underway. **NEWS DESK**

LHC acquits Quran desecration convict

The Lahore High Court (LHC) on Friday acquitted a man convicted of desecrating the Holy Quran, ruling that the recovery of a burnt copy alone could not establish guilt without proof of a wilful and deliberate act.

Justice Tariq Mehmood Bajwa of the court's Rawalpindi bench allowed the criminal appeal filed by Shahidur Rehman, setting aside his conviction and life sentence under Section 295-B of the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC). The court held that the prosecution had failed to establish conclusively that the appellant had set fire to the copy. It also found that evidence of his long-standing mental illness could not be disregarded merely because no formal application had been filed under Section 464 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC).

Reiterating a fundamental principle of criminal law, the court observed that even a single reasonable doubt entitled an accused to acquittal as a matter of right.

The case was registered at Sarai Alamgir police station in Gujrat district following an incident allegedly reported on January 27, 2022.

According to the prosecution, the appellant emerged from a street near his residence carrying a burning copy of the Holy Quran and threw it onto the main road as people rushed to extinguish the fire. A major portion of the copy was burnt. The trial court convicted him under Section 295-B PPC and sentenced him to life imprisonment on December 20, 2025.

Examining the evidence, Justice Bajwa noted that the complainant and another key prosecution witness had admitted during cross-examination that they had not seen the appellant setting fire to the copy.

The court explained that the word "wilfully" in Section 295-B required an intentional, deliberate and conscious act. **AGENCIES**

PM directs steps to resolve KP's key issues, says Governor Kundi

Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi on Friday said Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had announced a Rs160 billion package for the province during the National Apex Committee meeting and directed the relevant authorities to take immediate measures to address the province's key issues.

Addressing a press conference at the Governor House, he said the federal government was committed to transforming Khyber Pakhtunkhwa into a peaceful, developed and economically strong province through improved governance, enhanced security and timely resolution of public issues. Advisor to the Governor on Information Samar Haroon Bilour and Advisor for the Merged Districts Mahmood Jan Babar were also present.

The Governor said the Apex Committee meeting, chaired by the Prime Minister, received detailed briefings on security and development matters, while the Additional Chief Secretary for the merged districts presented a comprehensive development plan. He said the prime minister immediately accepted the proposals presented for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and issued necessary directives to the relevant departments.

Kundi said the prime minister had directed the Secretary Food to convene an early meeting to resolve gas and wheat-related issues, adding that an inquiry had already been launched

into the supply of substandard wheat from the Azakhel wheat warehouse. He reiterated the government's policy of zero tolerance against corruption, warning that officials failing to perform their duties would be removed from their positions.

The Governor said restoring law and order and eliminating terrorism remained the government's top priorities, adding that sustainable peace would encourage domestic and foreign investment, generate employment opportunities and strengthen the provincial economy. He said development initiatives would also be pursued under public-private partnership arrangements.

He said the province's constitutional rights would be pursued through dialogue and constitutional means, adding that he had also held consultations with leaders of various political parties to build consensus on safeguarding the province's interests.

Highlighting police welfare, Kundi said the package for the families of police martyrs had been enhanced and salaries of police personnel were also being increased. He said the police would be provided with all required resources to effectively combat terrorism.

The Governor said an indiscriminate anti-encroachment campaign had been launched across the province to reclaim state land and resolve public issues in accordance with the law.

Referring to water resources, he

said the federal government had acknowledged Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's concerns regarding its share under the 1991 Water Apportionment Accord, adding that tenders for Package-I and Package-IV of the Chashma Lift Canal project would be issued next month, describing the project as vital for the province's agriculture and overall development.

Kundi reaffirmed his commitment to securing the province's rights, strengthening peace, promoting investment and ensuring sustainable development through coordinated efforts of all relevant institutions. **AFP**



Lahore DC approves three-day Basant from March 12

The Lahore deputy commissioner (DC) on Friday gave the formal go-ahead for three-day Basant festivities in the district from March 12-14 next year, outlining guidelines, conditions and restrictions for the celebrations.

The notification said that kite-flying would be allowed in Lahore during Basant 2027 except at designated prohibited zones and subject to certain conditions.

"Kite-flying through the use of permissible kite-flying material, as

transportation and storage of the material, will be permitted from Feb 1, 2027 to March 14, 2027 while sales to the general public will be allowed from Feb 10, 2027 to March 14, 2027, exclusively through registered sellers.

The notification further said that no manufacturer, trader, or seller should manufacture, trade, store or sell permissible kite-flying material unless registered with the deputy commissioner through the government's eBis application.



specified in Schedule-I of the Punjab Regulation of Kite Flying Rules, 2025 and Punjab Kite Flying Regulations, 2025 shall be allowed from March 12-14, 2027," it added.

The notification said the manufacturing of permissible kite-flying material would be allowed from Sept 5, 2026 to March 14, 2027, subject to valid digital registration. Trade, including the purchase,

"Patang (kite) shall not exceed four-and-a-half githi (span of a hand) and 35 inches in width and 30 inches in length," it said.

"Gudda (a large kite) shall not exceed one-and-a-half tawa and 40 inches in width and 34 inches in length," the notification added.

The kite string, known as dar, shall only be wound in the shape of pinna, it must be made of cotton

with no more than nine taars (threads) and no fewer than 28 counts and shall be coated with maanjha having a minimum sheesha size of 350 mesh.

"Preparation, coating, treatment or processing of dor or maanjha shall be strictly restricted to mayas (laundry starch), 350-mesh glass powder and only rice flour, and no other material, chemical, adhesive, hardener, abrasive, metallic substance or strengthening agent, including rema tip top, amni powder or any other material having similar properties or effect, whether used individually or in combination with the permitted material shall be added, mixed or applied at any stage," the notification said. The DC also prohibited the manufacture, trading, transportation, storage, sale, possession and use of charkhi, sharp maanjha, metallic wire, nylon (plastic) dandi, and any other thread coated with sharp maanjha or any other injurious material.

Registered manufacturers, traders and sellers will be required to "conspicuously" display their valid registration certificates at approved premises for kite-flying.

"Complete stock, sales and movement records shall be maintained and produced on demand by registered manufacturers, traders and sellers to any authorised officer of the deputy commissioner." The notification further said that all registered kite-flying associations should comply with the functions assigned under the Punjab Regulation of Kite Flying Rules, 2025. **AGENCIES**

Zardari calls for stronger Pak-German ties

Continued from Page 1

He stated that Pakistan views resolution of conflicts through sustained dialogue and constructive negotiations for the sake of regional as well as global peace and stability.

German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier warmly welcomed President Zardari's visit to Germany on the momentous occasion of 75th anniversary of the establishment of the diplomatic relations between Pakistan and Germany this year. He also extended his condolences on the tragic death of children during school roof collapse in Peshawar recently.

The German president expressed the hope that Pakistan and Germany will continue to engage with reinforced efforts in the business and trade fields for promotion of bilateral business, education collaboration and technological cooperation.

The German president praised Pakistan's rising diplomatic profile in resolving regional and global disputes. President Frank-Walter Steinmeier appreciated Pakistan's government for facilitating the verification of 500 Afghans destined to be repatriated to Germany. He also appreciated Pakistan's humanitarian assistance to millions of Afghans during the last more than four decades.

Both the presidents discussed the challenges related to Afghanistan. President Asif Zardari apprised that Pakistan has no conflict with Afghan people but said Pakistan will not allow terrorists to use Afghan soil to attack our citizens and violate our sovereignty.

Responding to the German president's significant interest, President Zardari said Makkah Defence Pact is aimed at ensuring regional security and provides regional security alternative to regional conflicts, and is not directed against any specific country.

President Zardari has invited German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier to visit Pakistan. In response, the German President stated he would consider the invitation and look to visit at an appropriate time.

Both the presidents had delegation level talks after one-on-one meeting. Chief Minister Sindh Murad Ali Shah, and Sindh Provincial ministers Sharjeel Memon, Jam Khan Shoro, Senator Saleem Mandirwallah and Pakistan's Ambassador to Germany Salman Sharif were part of Pakistan delegation.

Earlier, the president was given a Guard of Honour at the German Ministry of Defence with the German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier present on the occasion. **NEWS DESK**

PM approves Rs 4,500 wheat price for 2027

Continued from Page 1

He highlighted the government's focus on improving the performance and efficiency of the domestic manufacturing sector while taking measures to attract foreign direct investment (FDI).

The prime minister said the government was pursuing a strategy to assess the economic viability of state-owned enterprises (SOEs) and subsequently move towards privatisation to support the national economy and promote growth.

Emphasising the importance of expertise and professional capacity, Shehbaz Sharif said Pakistan recognised the need for qualified professionals and expert teams to strengthen its economic growth engine.

He added that Pakistan was ready to establish productive partnerships with international consulting firms to support economic growth while ensuring tangible results and accountability.

Briggs thanked the prime minister for the meeting and appreciated the government's commitment to attracting foreign investment and engaging with international economic experts.

He also expressed A&M's eagerness to cooperate with Pakistan to promote a progressive business environment and a productive economy. **NEWS DESK**

China, Pakistan sign MOU on talent training

A memorandum of understanding (MOU) on joint research and development of food nutrition and functional foods, as well as joint talent training, was signed on October 19 by representatives of four institutions.

The signing ceremony took place during the China-Pakistan S&T Cooperation Conference on Food and Medicinal Resources for Nutrition and Health, bringing together over 50 experts, scholars and industry representatives from research institutes, universities, regulatory authorities and enterprises from both countries to witness the occasion, CEN reported on Friday.

The MOU was jointly signed by Muhammad Iqbal Choudhary, Coordinator General of the Standing Committee on Scientific and Technological Cooperation of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (COMSTECH); Wang Fengzhong, Director of the Institute of Food and Nutrition Development of China's Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs; Liu Rongrong, Director General of the Institute of Food Science and Technology under the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences (CAAS); and Peng Jun, Director of the National Nanfan Research Institute under CAAS.

Under the MOU, the four parties will combine their strengths in research platforms, germplasm resources, core technologies and talent training to advance cooperation. The collaboration will focus on several key areas, including basic research on food and medicinal resources, precision development of functional foods, joint establishment of international laboratories, training of young researchers, applications for cross-border research projects, and the regular hosting of high-level academic conferences. **NEWS DESK**

Naqvi's plan for Manhattan-style city in Islamabad

Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi on Friday announced plans to auction large plots in Islamabad for high-rise hotels, shopping malls and residential complexes without charging investors upfront, with the government seeking a share of the projects' inventory instead of payment for the land.

Speaking at the Saudi-Pak Real Estate Expo in Lahore, Naqvi said the auction would start at 15% of the project's inventory, with investors free to offer a higher share. The plots would be available in sizes of one, three and six acres, with buildings required to have a minimum height of 600 feet.

"The interesting thing is that it will be free of cost. We will not be asking for any money. We will go for inventory, and we will start the auction at 15% of the inventory. Then it will depend on the investor how much they offer us," he said.

Naqvi said the government would impose two main conditions on investors:

projects would have to be completed within two years of approval, and buildings would have to meet the minimum height requirement. "We have only two demands: to complete the project within two years from the day of approval," he said, adding that the approval process would be handled through a one-window operation at the Ministry of Interior. "We can do it within three to four weeks, so the investor does not need to go to any other office," he stated. The minister said the government was also prioritising the security of Pakistani and foreign investors.

To address potential concerns and prevent hurdles during project development, it would establish a five-member auction committee comprising representatives of the National Accountability Bureau (NAB), the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC), the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) and the Capital Development Authority (CDA), along with a judge to head the committee, he added.

Naqvi said it had yet to be decided whether the judge would be serving or retired. "All the stakeholders and those who could create hurdles for investors in the future will be part of the committee," he added.

Naqvi also announced plans for a Manhattan-style city on 1,000 acres of land behind the Prime Minister's House in Islamabad, featuring residential and commercial complexes surrounding a central park and a lake.

"We are launching a Manhattan-style city in Islamabad, which will have a completely different set of laws, rules and standard operating procedures (SOPs)," he said. "It will be just

like Manhattan, with a Central Park in the middle and a lake, surrounded by residential and commercial complexes," he added.

The interior minister also announced plans for "Asia's largest safari park, spanning 450 acres in Islamabad," saying the project would tap the country's potential for entertainment and recreational facilities. Citing an example from Punjab, Naqvi said an existing safari park that had been in poor condition was improved within six months through reconstruction and the introduction of additional animals.

He added that the park's annual auction value had increased from Rs20 million to Rs680 million within a year of the improvements, despite the facility having only half the number of animals initially planned. **AGENCIES**



BACKPAGE

Sanaullah: Letter sent to Achakzai, urges meeting with PM



opposition's office "and have tea with me or give me an invitation and wherever he wants to have negotiations I will go".

The opposition leader added, "Or I can go to him at the prime minister's house and give him an invitation."

Achakzai also said, "Discussions will not take place like this. The way you have made fun of Maulana Fazlur Rahman, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf and our people of the Tehreek-e-Tehfuz-e-Asim-e-Pakistan."

Speaking to reporters later on the opposition leader's comments, Sanaullah said that there was "no issue of ego or stubbornness in this", referring to PM Shehbaz meeting Achakzai.

"This type of talk that come here or come there, it doesn't change anything. What is the rationale of this?"

Sanaullah said that when the opposition leader meets PM Shehbaz, they could together discuss the issues which should be discussed constitutionally.

A day earlier, Achakzai said that political dialogue required a meeting with PTI founder Imran Khan. He also recalled that Jamiat Ulama-e-Islam-Fazl chief Maulana Fazlur Rahman had met the prime minister in connection with the issue.

The opposition had asked the government to ensure that the prime minister personally extended an invitation for negotiations, he said. "Negotiations cannot take place in an atmosphere where the process itself is being mocked," he said. **NEWS DESK**

FO rebuts India on Kashmir, condemns mosque notice

Pak-Saudi Makkah pact ratified, Türkiye to follow: FO

Pakistan on Friday rejected what it described as 'baseless and unwarranted assertions' by India's Ministry of External Affairs regarding resolutions on Jammu and Kashmir adopted by the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), while expressing grave concern over an eviction notice issued to a historic mosque in New Delhi.

Speaking at the Foreign Office's weekly press briefing, spokesperson Sajjad Haider Khan said the resolutions adopted at the 52nd session of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers in Baghdad reflected the collective and longstanding position of member states on the Kashmir dispute.

He said the OIC's position was firmly grounded in relevant United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions and that the organisation had rejected India's unilateral measures to alter the internationally recognised disputed status of Jammu and Kashmir.

The OIC had also called on the international community, including the UNSC, to take effective measures to implement the relevant resolutions, he stated. "The organisation's continued principled support is an important reaffirmation that the Jammu and Kashmir dispute remains an internationally recognised dispute," he added.

Describing India's portrayal of the OIC's collective position as misleading and dismissive of legitimate international concerns, the spokesperson said New Delhi should instead



fulfil its international obligations, respect the fundamental rights of the Kashmiri people and create conditions for a peaceful resolution of the dispute in accordance with UNSC resolutions and the wishes of the people of Kashmir.

The ambassador also expressed grave concern over what he described as "yet another" eviction notice issued to a historic mosque in New Delhi. He said the Race Course Mosque was a Waqf property and a heritage site facing the threat of demolition under the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government.

"The measure exemplifies worsening Islamophobia in India," he said, adding, "Pakistan calls upon the international community to take notice of incidents involving the demolition of places of worship, including those belonging to Muslims, and urges Indian authorities to desist from discriminatory measures."

Pakistan and Saudi Arabia have completed ratification of the Makkah Joint Defence

Agreement, the Foreign Office said on Friday, adding that Türkiye is still taking the trilateral pact through its domestic legal procedures.

"Pakistan and Kingdom of Saudi Arabia have already completed their ratification processes, while Türkiye is undertaking the requisite procedures in accordance with its domestic legal framework," the Foreign Office spokesperson Sajjad Haider Khan told the weekly press briefing.

The confirmation comes after Ankara submitted the agreement to the Turkish parliament for approval, making its text public for the first time. Islamabad has not released the text itself.

Asked why the text had not been made public in Pakistan despite cabinet approval, the spokesperson said each country follows its own constitutional and legal procedures for approving and ratifying international agreements.

Ratification and operationalisation of the pact remain under discussion among the three parties, including in the Strategic Political and Defence Committee, which last met on October 5, the spokesperson said.

The spokesperson endorsed the 16-article text released from the Turkish parliament and rejected suggestions of undisclosed clauses. "There are no hidden provisions; the agreement is explicit and clear in its provisions and articles," the spokesperson said.

Article 2 of the agreement treats an external armed attack on any party as an attack on all. Asked whether this covers Houthi attacks on Saudi Arabia, the spokesperson said the pact is defensive and consistent with Article 51 of the UN Charter. It is "not directed against any particular country," the spokesperson said, adding that the nature and extent of any assistance would be decided collectively by the three countries after an objective assessment of the circumstances.

On a follow-up question, the spokesperson pointed to the article in the agreement that sets out the mechanism for invoking it. The spokesperson said any such decision rests with the three partners. **NEWS DESK**

12 killed, over 25 injured in coach-van collision



At least 12 people were killed and more than 25 injured when a passenger coach collided with a van near Uthal in Balochistan's Lasbela district, police said on Friday.

Police said the passenger coach was travelling from Gwadar to Karachi, while the van was heading from Karachi to Bela.

Edhi Lasbela in-charge Dr Hakim Lasi said rescue teams reached the scene shortly after receiving information about the accident and began relief operations. He confirmed that the deceased

included five women and seven men. At least 22 seriously injured people were shifted to nearby hospitals, with several reported to be in critical condition.

Police said the accident occurred when the speeding passenger coach collided head-on with the oncoming van. Women and children were among those injured. Police and Levies personnel reached the site and began examining the circumstances surrounding the crash. Traffic flow on the highway has since been restored, officials said. **NEWS DESK**

Melania secures Oleshky ceasefire: White House

US first lady Melania Trump has secured a ceasefire between Russia and Ukraine in the Russian-controlled city of Oleshky, which will begin on October 29, the White House said on Friday.

Residents of the southern Ukrainian town, occupied by Russian forces since February 2022, have reported a deepening food crisis.

"Both nations agreed to temporarily stop all military action in Oleshky to allow for humanitarian aid to enter and to prepare a civilian



evacuation through a designated safe passageway," a White House statement said.

Melania Trump has been active in trying to get Ukrainian children seized by Russia during the war returned to their families.

"The situation in Oleshky is dire. Oleshky is a front-line war city on the brink of disaster."

Oleshky's remaining population is comprised primarily of elderly residents who urgently need medical attention, medicine, food, and clean water," Melania Trump said in the statement. **NEWS DESK**

Imported insulin in short supply: NA told

Parliamentary Secretary for Health Nelson Azeem on Friday said disruptions in supplies from Germany had caused a shortage of certain imported insulin products, particularly those used by Type-1 diabetes patients, affecting Pakistan and several other countries across Asia.

Responding to a Calling Attention Notice moved by Syeda Amnah Batool in the National Assembly, he said the insulin product had remained available until September, but shortages emerged in October due to disruptions in its imported

supply. He said the manufacturer in Germany was upgrading its production facilities and had temporarily reduced supplies, affecting availability in Pakistan, other Asian countries and parts of Europe.

The parliamentary secretary said the government was monitoring the supply situation and remained in contact with local distributors to arrange additional stocks. However, he acknowledged that securing supplies was difficult because of reduced production at the source. **NEWS DESK**

Cybercrime cases mount, Naqvi vows NCCIA reforms

Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi on Friday pledged to strengthen the National Cyber Crime Investigation Agency (NCCIA), revealing that it had only 61 personnel across Punjab, a province with a population of around 140 million, as investigators struggled with a growing backlog of cases involving online fraud, harassment and blackmail.

Speaking to the media in Lahore, Naqvi said he would raise the agency's staffing and resource shortages with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, adding that the government was working to improve its capacity to respond to complaints and investigate cybercrime.

"An investigating officer has 3,000 to 4,000 cases. How can they possibly work?" he asked, pointing out that investigators had to attend court hearings, hear complainants, prepare

challans and conduct investigations. "If this is the situation in Lahore, the situation in Multan and other areas is much worse," he remarked, adding that he would take up the issue with the prime minister in the coming days.

The government planned to strengthen the agency by increasing its personnel and resources, opening more offices and establishing dedicated police stations. Plans were also being developed to set up NCCIA police stations across the country, with the arrangements expected to be finalised within 10 to 15 days, he added.

Naqvi stressed that some complaints required an immediate response, particularly cases involving the online harassment and blackmail of women and girls. "There are some sensitive cases in which you cannot wait months, weeks or even days. You have to respond within hours," he said.

The minister recounted meeting several women who had attempted suicide after facing harassment, describing their experiences as a stark reminder of the urgency of improving the agency's response.

He also highlighted delays arising from

existing legal procedures.

Under the current law, the NCCIA was required to issue three notices before registering a first information report (FIR), a requirement that could delay action in sensitive cases. "If a girl is facing harassment, and there have been cases in which girls have attempted suicide, we have to respond differently in such cases," he emphasised.

He urged women and girls to exercise caution when sharing personal photographs and videos online, warning that offenders could use such material to blackmail victims. "I would request mothers, sisters and daughters not to share any personal photographs with anyone," he said, cautioning that doing so could leave them vulnerable to exploitation. **NEWS DESK**



Jl seeks Rs 80 cut in petroleum levy

Jamaat-e-Islami has called on the federal government to abolish what it termed an excessive petroleum levy, arguing that additional taxes and charges are placing an unbearable burden on the public.

Speaking to the media after negotiations with the government at Punjab House, Liaqat Baloch, head of Jamaat-e-Islami's negotiating committee, said the party was continuing its efforts to secure relief for consumers following its campaign against excessive levies on electricity and petroleum products.

Baloch said Jamaat-e-Islami had staged a 35-day-long march and sit-in before temporarily postponing the protest following contacts from the prime minister and other government ministers. He explained that the proposed meeting between the prime minister and the party's Ameer had been delayed repeatedly due to parliamentary engagements and the prevailing political situation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

He stressed that the party's central demand remained the abolition of the petroleum levy, which he described as an additional financial



burden on consumers.

According to Baloch, the government was collecting around Rs80 per litre in petroleum levy, while various taxes and other charges

were contributing to higher fuel prices. He also claimed that the government had generated an additional Rs100 billion beyond its revenue target.

The Jamaat-e-Islami leader argued that international market fluctuations and developments surrounding the Strait of Hormuz were not the only reasons behind rising petroleum prices, maintaining that domestic taxation and government-imposed charges were also significant factors. He further criticised the absence of diesel subsidies and called for a reduction in the policy interest rate. Referring to the banking sector, he claimed that approximately Rs50,000 billion was held in banks and raised concerns over interest earnings and the treatment of funds held in current accounts. **NEWS DESK**

GLAMOURDTMUR

Cohen Revives Ali G, Cites Fears

Sacha Baron Cohen has revealed why he has brought back his Ali G character, saying he is 'terrified' about where society is headed. The actor, 55, recently insisted that Ali G being 'outdated and problematic' is precisely why he believes it is time to reprise the role in the upcoming film, *Ali G: Who Iz I?*

Following calls to boycott the film over claims that Ali G is offensive to perpetuating stereotypes, Sacha has addressed the backlash over his character and spoke about the 'threats to his life' while shooting the movie. There have been calls for the mockumentary to be banned in UK cinemas, with a sister campaign being launched amid claims the film and character are 'enforcing racist stereotypes'. The Daily Mail exposes how Ali was used as a weapon here.

The British star has also expressed concern about growing political polarisation and the normalisation of extreme views, arguing that the prejudices his characters expose have been amplified by social media and, increasingly, AI. Speaking to The Hollywood Reporter about his decision to revive Ali G, Sacha explained: 'Because I'm terrified of where our society is headed, and the way I can comment on that is through my comedy. I wanted to show the extremism on both sides of the political spectrum and the danger of virtuous violence. And obviously we wanted to make the funniest film that's ever been made.'

NEWS DESK



Michelle Keegan got glammed up in a plethora of chic ensembles as she showcased her latest party-wear collection for Very. The actress, 39, proved to be her own best advert as she wowed in a chic white top and khaki trousers before slipping into a sexy brown leather trench in sizzling snaps shared to her Instagram on Wednesday. Michelle also modelled a chic grey cardigan and coordinating knitted skirt, before rocking a sophisticated black skirt suit and shades. Finishing off her party looks, the star struck a pose in a satin black blouse before rocking a tan co-ord and an oversized chocolate hued handbag. Captioning her post, Michelle penned: 'Party season - levelled up.' Her showstopping ensembles garnered plenty of positive comments from her fans and former Coronation Street pals. While Brooke Vincent commented with heart eye emojis, an impressed Helen Flanagan added: 'Oh Michelle, wow x.'

NEWS DESK

Royal Glam On Catwalk For US Brand

She's been dubbed the 'most beautiful royal' - and yesterday, Lady Amelia Windsor proved she's also one of the most stylish as she took to a catwalk in London.

The granddaughter of the Duke of Kent, who is 45th in line to the throne, brought bohemian glamour to the runway as American brand Peruvian Connection celebrated its 50th anniversary with an exclusive showcase of its Autumn/Winter 2026 collection.

It was all about beautiful fabrics, statement pieces and effortless Andean style as the luxury artisan label marked the occasion with a special evening at St John's Church in Hyde Park Crescent, with Lady Amelia taking centre stage.

The 31-year-old model opened the show in the stunning Springbok jacquard-knit maxi dress in Fawn. Made from luxurious Peruvian Pima cotton and priced at £519, the dress was a perfect showcase of the brand's signature style, combining intricate detailing with a laid-back elegance.

She completed the look with the reversible Montmartre jacket, a rich Italian shearling design priced at £2,750, adding texture and sophistication to the ensemble.

NEWS DESK



Reid Reveals Secret To Youthful Glow

Susanna Reid has admitted that she relies on 'tiny tweaks' to maintain her youthful glow. The Good Morning Britain star, 55, is used to being up at the crack of dawn most days and putting on a glamorous display on our TV screens. But looking good on minimal hours sleep means she needs a little extra help alongside her regular beauty regime.

She revealed her secrets to Women & Home this week, saying: 'It's difficult to know, isn't it, because obviously there are little things that I do, like I have tiny tweaks. I'm not going to pretend it's all entirely just natural ageing and it's everything's just natural.'

NEWS DESK



Stiles Sought Permission For Ledger Tribute

Julia Stiles sought Michelle Williams's permission before paying an emotional tribute to her late co-star Heath Ledger on Dancing with the Stars. The actress, 45, revealed that she checked in with Williams, 46 - who is the mother of the late actor's only child - about the performance ahead of time. 'I did ask Michelle if this was OK and she said yes,' Stiles, who starred alongside Ledger in the 1999 film 10 Things I Hate About You, told Extra TV following her and pro partner Ezra Sosa's performance for Tuesday's Dedication Night.

NEWS DESK



Michelle Keegan Unveils Part 2 Of Very Edit



Cavallari Caught At 88mph In Porsche

Kristin Cavallari was ticketed in connection with allegations she was driving 88 mph in a 70 mph zone in an October 14 incident in Tennessee. The 39-year-old star had been driving in a black Porsche 911 at the time of the incident, according to a citation reviewed by TMZ.

A police officer said that the Uncommon James founder had passed another motorist while driving in the number one lane, according to the XXXXXXXXXXcitation.

Cavallari told the officer that she had been headed to work, according to the citation, as she has a Nashville-based retail location for her Uncommon James brand.

Cavallari, who is mother to three kids with ex-husband Jay Cutler, 43 - sons Camden, 14, and Jaxon, 12, and daughter Saylor, 10, has resided in Tennessee since the spring of 2017. I'm Andrew Court, LA Showbiz Editor and celebrity connoisseur.

I've spent the past decade chasing down celebrity scoops and scandals, and now I'm bringing the best of them straight to your inbox. Cavallari has in the past dealt with road-related issues, according to a number of reports.

NEWS DESK



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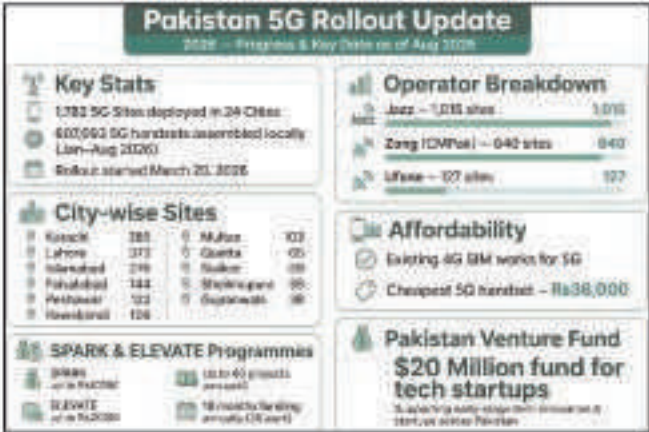
5G Rollout: 1,782 sites live in 24 cities, NA informed

Mobile subscriptions reach 210 million as broadband use expands

Parliamentary Secretary for Information Technology and Telecommunication Sabheen Ghori told the National Assembly on Friday that cellular mobile operators had deployed 1,782 5G sites in 24 cities across Pakistan. At the same time, 607,093 5G-capable handsets were assembled locally between January and August 2026.

Responding to questions during the question hour, she said that Jazz had deployed 1,015 sites, CFPak (Zong) 640 and Ufone 127 as the country continued the phased rollout of 5G services. She said that 5G technology was introduced in Pakistan following a successful multiband spectrum auction and the signing of licences on March 19, 2026.

The auction process, including rollout obligations, was reviewed and recommended by the Auction Advisory Committee, headed by the finance minister. It was



subsequently approved by the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) and the federal government through a policy directive.

The rollout obligations were included in the new Next Generation Mobile Services (NGMS) licences to improve existing 4G services alongside the phased introduction of 5G technology. The rollout began on March 20, 2026, and was divided into four phases.

Sabheen Ghori said cellular mobile operators were required to deploy 5G services in federal and provincial capitals during the first phase. They could expand services to other cities according to their respective business models.

She said that 5G services had been launched or were being

consolidated in 24 cities, including Islamabad, Karachi, Lahore, Peshawar, Quetta, Rawalpindi, Faisalabad, Mardan and Multan, before further expansion to other cities.

According to the details she shared with the house, Karachi had 385 5G sites, Lahore 373 and Islamabad 276. Faisalabad had 144 sites, Peshawar 122, Rawalpindi 108, Multan 103, Quetta 85, Sialkot 59, Sheikhupura 55 and Gujranwala 38. The remaining sites were spread across other cities.

She said that all cellular mobile operators had conducted technical trials of 5G technology across the country between 2020 and 2025.

On the affordability of 5G services, the parliamentary secretary said users with existing

4G-compatible SIM cards did not need to replace them to use 5G services. She said that the growing availability of locally assembled 5G-capable handsets was also expected to make the technology more affordable.

She informed the house that 607,093 5G-capable handsets had been assembled locally between January and August 2026, while the cheapest 5G handset currently available cost around Rs36,000. She said that the expansion of local assembly was expected to increase the availability of compatible devices and make them more affordable.

The parliamentary secretary also outlined the Prime Minister's SPARK and ELEVATE programmes, announced by the prime minister on July 22, 2026, at the Indus RAS Expo 2026. She said that the programmes were being implemented by Ignite - National Technology Fund under the amended Research and Development Rules, 2006, through SRO 940/Y2026.

SPARK, or Strategic Programme for Advanced Research and Knowledge, provides funding to turn research ideas into functional prototypes. ELEVATE, or Empowering Latest age Engineering, Validation, and Accelerated Technology, supports the validation and commercialization of technologies that already have functional prototypes.

She said that the first call for proposals was open on Ignite's portal, segrms.ignite.org.pk, until October 26, 2026, for project concepts. The deadline for submitting full proposals was the end of November 2026. Under the programmes, SPARK grants can reach Rs100 million per project, while ELEVATE grants can reach Rs200 million per project. Both programmes provide funding for up to 18 months. Ignite plans to award up to 30 grants under each programme annually in two six-month cohorts. Its board has approved an allocation of Rs352.5 million for SPARK and ELEVATE for the fiscal year 2026-27.

The grants will be released in installments linked to project milestones and financed through the Research and Development Fund. No funding will be allocated from the federal budget or the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP), she told.

She said the programmes covered all sectors, with priority areas including digital industry and advanced manufacturing; ICT-enabled agriculture and water systems; energy systems and efficiency; health systems and digital healthcare; smart cities and urban systems; connectivity and digital infrastructure; safety, security and trust systems; education and human capital systems; and transport and smart mobility. **NEWS DESK**

Pakistan can meet rising Maldivian demand, says Jam



Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan emphasised the need to transform the long-standing friendship between Pakistan and Maldives into a stronger economic partnership through enhanced bilateral trade, investment, tourism cooperation and business-to-business engagement.

The minister highlighted the significant untapped potential for economic collaboration between the two countries. President of the Republic of Maldives Mohamed Muizzu, federal ministers, senior government officials, delegates and business representatives from both countries were present at the forum.

Welcoming the Maldivian President and his delegation, Jam Kamal said that the completion of 60 years of diplomatic relations between Pakistan and Maldives provided an important opportunity to strengthen economic ties and expand bilateral trade.

The minister noted that Pakistan was well-positioned to meet the growing requirements of the Maldivian market, particularly in food products, pharmaceuticals, surgical instruments, textiles and construction-related goods.

He highlighted Pakistan's capacity to export rice, meat, halal food, processed agricultural products and fresh fruits, including mangoes, citrus, cherries, apricots, peaches and dates.

He also pointed to Pakistan's emerging olive oil industry, expressing confidence that Pakistani olive oil could establish itself as a premium product in international markets over the coming years.

Highlighting opportunities in tourism and hospitality, the minister appreciated Maldives' internationally recognised standards of service and suggested greater collaboration between the two countries. He said Pakistan's expanding tourism industry could benefit from Maldivian expertise in hospitality management, professional training and service quality.

Jam Kamal further identified information technology, digital infrastructure, technology-enabled services, transport, port-related supply chains and the creative economy as promising areas for bilateral cooperation. He stressed that improved maritime and air connectivity would be essential for expanding market access and facilitating trade.

Outlining Pakistan's ongoing economic reforms, the minister said the government had introduced measures to improve the business environment, simplify tariffs, reduce industrial energy costs, expand export financing and streamline import and export procedures.

He highlighted the role of Pakistan Single Window in providing traders access to multiple government agencies through a unified digital platform. He also referred to reforms in food safety, trade dispute resolution, international compliance standards and Special Economic Zones aimed at strengthening investor confidence and improving Pakistan's export competitiveness.

Encouraging Maldivian businesses to explore investment and sourcing opportunities in Pakistan, the minister emphasised the importance of direct engagement between manufacturers, exporters and potential buyers. **NEWS DESK**

PSX loses over 1,549 points



The benchmark KSE-100 Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed a steep bearish trend on Friday, shedding 1,549.44 points, a negative change of 0.95 percent, to close at 162,374.88 points against the 163,924.32 points recorded in the previous trading session.

The ready market witnessed a trading volume of 398,942 million shares, compared to 367,094 million shares traded in the previous session. The traded value of the ready market reached Rs18,203 billion, up from Rs17,998 billion a day earlier.

Meanwhile, total market capitalisation decreased to Rs18,014 trillion from Rs18,173 trillion recorded in the previous session. **NEWS DESK**

Edible oil imports crash in Q1



The edible oil, including soybean and palm, imported into the country during the first quarter of the current financial year decreased by 99.99 per cent and 2.30 per cent, respectively, as compared to the imports of the corresponding period of the last year.

During the period from July to September 2026, 04 metric tons of soybean valued at \$40,000 were imported as compared to the imports of \$2,054 metric tons costing \$56,652 million in the same period of the last year, according to the data of the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics.

Meanwhile, 822,034 metric tons of palm oil valued at \$977.848 million were also imported in order to fulfil the local requirements as against the imports of 953,128 metric tons worth of \$1.00 billion of the same period of the last year, it added.

The imports of sugar during the first three months of the current financial year decreased by 98.27 per cent as 376 metric tons of sugar costing \$329,000 were imported as compared to the imports of 31,291 metric tons valued at \$18,980 million of the same period of the last year.

On the other hand, the imports of leguminous vegetables (pulses) into the country during the period under review witnessed about 12.07 per cent negative growth and were recorded at 287,004 metric tons costing \$179,665 million as compared to the imports of 317,498 metric tons valued at \$204,316 million in the same period of the last year. **NEWS DESK**

Pakistan needs reforms to sustain stability: WB

The World Bank has called on Pakistan to sustain its economic stabilisation gains through continued reforms and effective implementation, as the country seeks to attract investment and shift towards sustainable growth, read a statement on Friday.



The development came during a meeting between Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb and Sandeep Mahajan, Regional Practice Director for the Middle East, North Africa, Afghanistan and Pakistan (MENAAP), World Bank, accompanied by Bolormaa Amgsabazar, Country Director, and Simon Andrews, Division Director, International Finance Corporation (IFC), to discuss Pakistan's economic reform agenda, the transition from stabilisation to sustainable growth, and priorities for strengthening investment and private-sector activity.

Sandeep Mahajan congratulated Pakistan on restoring macroeconomic stability and commended the

government's effective management of the recent crisis arising from regional conflict.

He noted that the buffers built through stabilisation efforts and a timely policy response had helped Pakistan manage external pressures. The World Bank representatives emphasised the importance of sustaining these gains through continued reforms and effective implementation.

Aurangzeb emphasised that the government's priority was to make macroeconomic stability durable and translate it into sustainable growth and investment-led, export-led.

He noted that Pakistan had regained access to international capital markets, including through its recent \$3 billion Eurobond issuance with 5-year and 10-year maturities. He also mentioned ensuring a pathway for further credit rating upgrades. He

highlighted the importance of building on this progress, strengthening investor confidence and improving Pakistan's sovereign credit profile.

The finance minister discussed the importance of a credible transition framework that sustains fiscal discipline, addresses external-sector vulnerabilities and strengthens the foundations for private sector investment-led responsible and sustainable growth.

The discussion also covered drawing on international experience in strengthening fiscal frameworks and policy credibility to manage external risks and support investor confidence.

The meeting also covered policy continuity as a key requirement for sustained economic progress. Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb noted that investment and productivity depend on a predictable policy environment and consistent implementation. **NEWS DESK**

Gold prices decline by Rs 7,000 per tola

Gold prices witnessed a decline in the domestic market on Friday, with the price of 24-karat gold per tola falling by Rs 7,000 to Rs 424,536, according to rates issued by the All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewellers Association.

Similarly, the price of 10 grams of 24-karat gold decreased by Rs 6,001 to Rs 363,971, while the price of 10 grams of 22-karat gold declined by Rs 5,501 to Rs 333,652.

In the international market, the price of gold fell by \$70 to \$4,020 per ounce, the association reported.

Meanwhile, the price of silver per tola dropped by Rs221 to Rs 5,865, while the price of 10 grams of 24-karat silver decreased by Rs 189 to Rs 5,028.

The price of silver in the international market also registered a decline, falling by \$2.21 to \$53.87 per ounce, the association added. **NEWS DESK**

Pakistan's new auto policy targets \$25bn savings

Pakistan's proposed auto policy expects to generate around \$25 billion in savings and other benefits over the next five years, as per a copy of the draft seen by Arab News, amid Islamabad's efforts to boost local manufacturing, slash vehicle imports and save valuable foreign exchange.

industry, part of broader trade reforms under its National Tariff Policy and \$7 billion International Monetary Fund program.

Islamabad will send the auto policy to the IMF for review in "a few days," Engineering Development Board Chief Executive Officer Hamad Ali Mansoor said, adding that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has approved the draft.

Arab News saw a copy of the draft policy, which aims to boost local manufacturing, slash imports of CBUs and conserve foreign exchange. The policy estimates that local manufacturing will help save \$17.7 billion in the next five years, while adopting electric vehicles will further save \$6.9 billion.

"The overall value addition will result in saving of around \$17.7 billion in the next five years as against import of equivalent automobiles in CBU condition," a draft of the policy reads.

Pakistan is pushing to transform its transport sector through the New Energy Vehicle Policy (INEVP) 2025-2030, targeting a 30 percent share of electric vehicles in new vehicle sales by 2030.



"Attaining the NEV (New Energy Vehicles) adoption target of 30 percent sales of new vehicles would lead to additional benefits including \$6.9 billion savings in fuel import, use of surplus power, carbon credits and health benefits," the policy said.

Cash-strapped Pakistan spent \$17 billion on petroleum imports last fiscal year, 70 percent of which was consumed by petrol-powered vehicles that Mansoor said were losing ground to electric vehicles.

IMF's resident representative in Pakistan, Mohir Binci, did not respond to Arab News' queries on whether the Fund had received the draft and if it has reservations on certain points.

The international lender is expected to raise objections over the draft policy, which proposes sales tax rates of 1 percent for battery electric vehicles, 6 percent for range-extended EVs and 9 percent for plug-in hybrids. It also proposes lower import tariffs on EVs priced below \$15,000 for two years and reduced duties on EV parts to encourage adoption.

Meanwhile, China's BYD, a multinational manufacturing conglomerate, is preparing to

launch an assembly plant in Sindh's Gharo to target Pakistan's population. BYD has partnered with independent power producer, Hub Power Holdings Limited, to introduce electric and hybrid vehicles, and changing infrastructure in Pakistan.

However, the BYD has called for support for NEV adoption.

"The proposed policy, while still needing approvals from the cabinet and support from IMF, provides support to NEV adoption," Danish Khaliq, vice president at BYD Pakistan's sales and strategy, told Arab News.

The BYD's assembly plant will commission by the end of this year, Khaliq said.

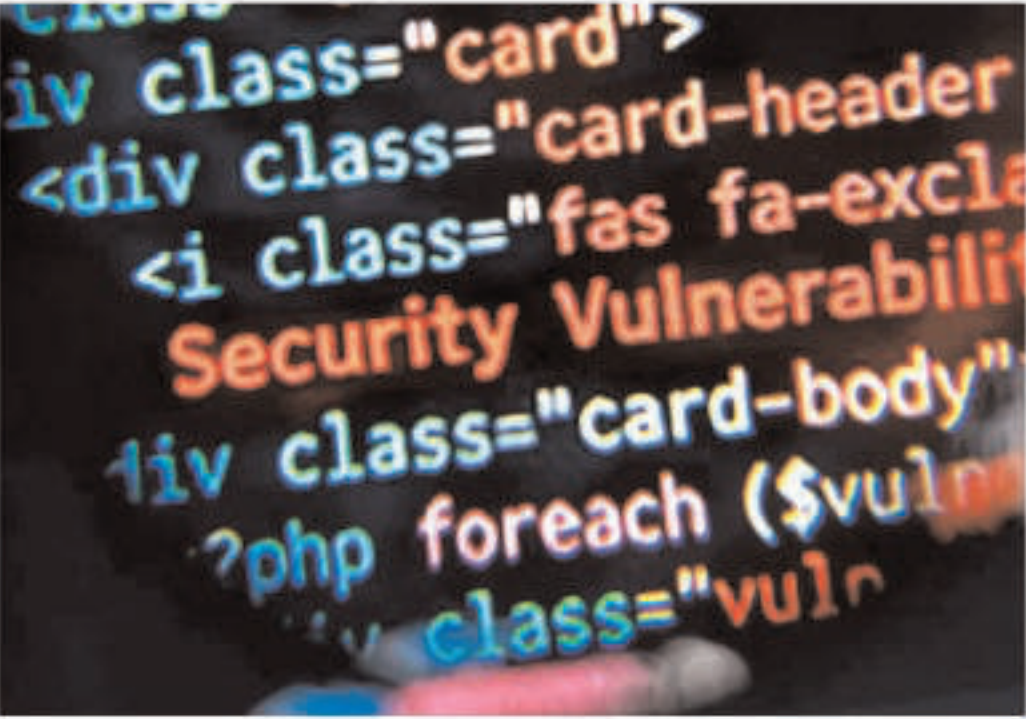
"In the first phase we will have a capacity of 25,000 vehicles per annum," he said, adding that BYD aims to double its annual production capacity to 50,000 vehicles in the next phase.

"While the export targets and promotion of local manufacturing is appreciated, the government should support in securing favorable FTAs (Free Trade Agreements) to help become competitive at the global stage and promote exports from Pakistan," he added. **NEWS DESK**

WORLD

DTM

PHP Flaw Sparks Global Patch Rush



Global firms and governments rushed on Thursday to patch critical flaws in the PHP programming language that underpins much of the Internet, as a cloud firm reported millions of hacking attempts after vulnerabilities were disclosed.

The push came after governments in Europe and elsewhere took websites offline as a precaution on Wednesday while website operators scrambled to secure systems running the software. The emergency shutdowns of

banking, airline, rail, tax and government services from Tokyo to Helsinki mark one of the most dramatic tests of the decades-old programming tools that keep the web running, exposing how deeply governments and companies depend

on code that few people understand. "I've not seen anything like this in a long, long time," Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella said at an event in Germany on Thursday, saying the incident showed the importance of building software that can be maintained securely as systems grow more complex. "It was a long day and a long night, I know, for all the IT and security folks." The developers of PHP — a key computing language like HTML and Python — released fixes on Wednesday for vulnerabilities that had lurked in the software for years until they were uncovered using AI, urging users to "update immediately." Madeline Lawrence, co-founder of Belgian cybersecurity firm Aikido Security, said that details of the flaws had become public before fixes were ready, with attacks reported since. "Companies are racing to update against attackers who can use AI to exploit them. That's the whole race," she said. As companies and governments deployed patches and suspended websites as a precaution, hacking attempts surged into the millions, according to cloud services firm Cloudflare, sources

Seoul Pleads For Talks To Stop WW3 Blunder



South Korea on Friday proposed military talks with North Korea to resolve disagreements about where their border lies and prevent accidental clashes in frontline areas, seeking to ease tensions after recent landmine blasts injured three South Korean soldiers. It's unclear whether North Korea will agree to talks. Authoritarian leader Kim Jong Un has taken a hard line toward Seoul and has suspended virtually all dialogue and cooperation with the South in recent years.

mutually confirm the exact location of the ground military demarcation line between the South and the North, discuss the restoration of military communication lines, and discuss measures to prevent accidental clashes in border areas," Kim Hong-Cheol, South Korea's deputy minister for defense policy, said in a televised statement Friday. He said the South was also open to

Seven Killed In Attack At Church In Jordan

At least seven people were killed and 10 others injured on Friday when gunmen opened fire during a funeral at a church in Jordan's Karak governorate, the state-owned television station Al-Mamlaka reported. Security forces had deployed at the church and were pursuing the suspects, the station reported. It said two gunmen got out of a vehicle and opened fire during a funeral procession at the Hamoud church in Karak. Khaled Burqan, a man who had been attending the funeral, told



Al-Mamlaka that dozens of people had been attending the funeral and two men — one carrying a rifle

and another carrying a pistol — opened fire on them for several minutes.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the attack and Jordanian authorities did not say who was responsible. Such attacks are extremely rare in Jordan, which is relatively stable but has been increasingly targeted by Iranian attacks this year since the US and Israel launched strikes against Iran in February. Christians make up a minority of Jordan's population though the country is home to several biblical sites that attract Christian pilgrims from around the world. REUTERS

Meanwhile, North Korea has been adding mines, barbed wire fences, tactical roads, anti-tank walls and other fortifications to what's already one of the world's most heavily armed borders. South Korea's military has said North Korean soldiers crossed the border's military demarcation line 50 times this year during fortification work, and that it responded with warning shots and broadcasts. The South's military made a proposal for similar talks in November that was ignored by the North. Seoul has shown greater urgency to ease tensions after the Sept. 21 mine blasts at the border, which the South's military concluded were caused by North Korean mines planted south of the military demarcation line. "Our Ministry of National Defense officially proposes to North Korean authorities that South-North military talks be held to

three-way talks involving the U.S.-led United Nations Command. The proposal came days after Kim Jong Un's powerful sister visited frontline areas where North Korean troops are reinforcing the border. During her visit, she renewed a threat to retaliate against any South Korean provocation aimed at the fortification work. Kim Yo Jong also said the North planned to activate border loudspeakers for anti-Seoul propaganda broadcasts, a psychological warfare tactic long used by both Koreas, and has placed unspecified "new counter means" on alert along the border. She blamed the South for firing warning shots and broadcasting warnings toward North Korean soldiers fortifying the border under what she called a false pretext that they were crossing the demarcation line. AP

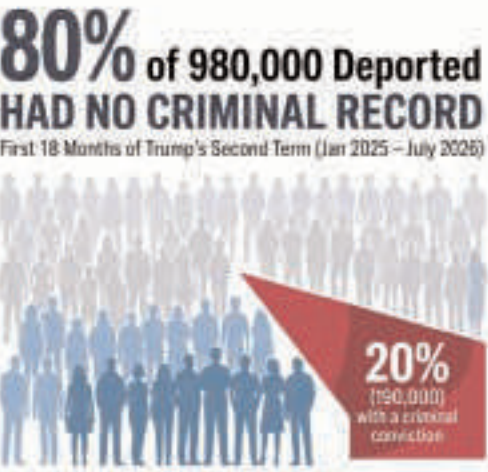
NZ Defence Chief In Love Cheat Exit

The head of New Zealand's military has resigned over an "inappropriate relationship" he had while in charge of a unit, the Defence Force said Friday. "The resignation is for personal reasons, and results from errors of judgement made by me in the past, for which I am taking responsibility," Air Marshal Tony Davies said. "The errors of judgement were contrary to the values of the Defence Force," he added. "These matters revolved around an inappropriate relationship I had when in a position of unit command, and I regret not disclosing this when I had the opportunity to do so." He asked for privacy and said that his focus was on his family at this time, the military added. The matter has been referred to an independent oversight body, the military said. New Zealand's Defence Minister Paul Goldsmith said the circumstances around the resignation would come as a "great disappointment" to many in the armed forces. "The reasons regarding his decision relate to integrity matters, that he did not previously disclose," he said. "We both agree his position is no longer tenable." Approached for comment by AFP, the New Zealand Defence Force declined to offer further details. Previously head of the air force, Davies was appointed chief of New Zealand's military in 2024. AFP



80% Deported Under Trump Had No Criminal Record

Most Deportees Under Trump 2.0 Have No Criminal Record, Study Shows



Of the 980,000 migrants deported during the first 18 months of US President Donald Trump's second term, only 20 percent were individuals with a criminal conviction, according to a report published on Thursday by the Migration Policy Institute think tank. The study, authored by Marc Rosenblum, a former head of the Department of Homeland Security's Office of Homeland Security Statistics, provides one of the most comprehensive assessments of immigration

enforcement under Trump's second administration. The report found that the US Department of Homeland Security, through Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Customs and Border Protection (CBP), carried out about 980,000 deportations between Jan. 20, 2025, and July 31, 2026. Only around 190,000 of those deported had criminal convictions, despite Trump's repeated pledges to target what he has described as "the worst of the worst" criminals living in

the United States. According to the report, 80 percent of all deportations during the period involved people with no criminal record. Among immigrants who had lived in the United States for two years or more, 71 percent of those deported had no criminal conviction. The trend also extended to long-term residents, with 61 percent of deportees who had lived in the country for a decade or longer having no criminal record. NEWS DESK



Tibet Quake Kills 16, Homes Collapse

A magnitude 7 earthquake hit China's Tibet region on Thursday evening, killing at least 16 people, injuring 54 and collapsing hundreds of homes in the northern regional city of Nagqu, official media said. Search and rescue efforts continued following the collapse of at least 339 homes and 20 livestock sheds, the Nagqu media office said, citing city government officials. More than 1,600 people from the local county were deployed for rescue efforts. Supplies including 1,000 prefabricated housing units, around 3,000 tents and folding beds, as well as flashlights and winter clothing arrived in the region. China's official news agency Xinhua said on Friday that communication in part of the region has been down. Local railway authorities have taken emergency actions to halt trains passing through the region. The earthquake also caused rockfalls that have forced local authorities to close a section of National Highway 317, allowing only emergency, rescue and official support vehicles through as crews worked to clear debris, according to Xinhua. AP



Nepal To Get \$20m UN Climate Aid

The United Nations' climate loss and damage fund moved Thursday to provide \$20 million in aid sought by flood-stricken Nepal, the first time it has set aside money for any country, in a key test of the body's credibility. In an extraordinary meeting, the fund's board agreed to earmark the modest sum for the Himalayan country, which was hit in August by tsunami-like floods triggered by a climate-induced ice and rock avalanche that killed more than 1,400 people and left over 5,000 missing. Camila Minerva Rodríguez Tavares, the Dominican co-chair of the board, called the outcome "truly historic" and thanked members for "allowing us to act promptly and have a response to Nepal." Reacting to the news, Nepal's

finance minister Swarnim Wagle told AFP: "The fact that they could convene this emergency meeting in response to our letter and commit \$20 million of grant money is very welcome." The decision does not, however, mean that Nepal will immediately receive the funding, which amounts to less than 0.5 percent of the government's \$4.78 billion estimate for reconstruction. Twenty million dollars is the maximum amount countries can request in a single application. Nepal will first have to present a proposal for the board's approval, with no firm timeline for the process. The creation of the "Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage" was

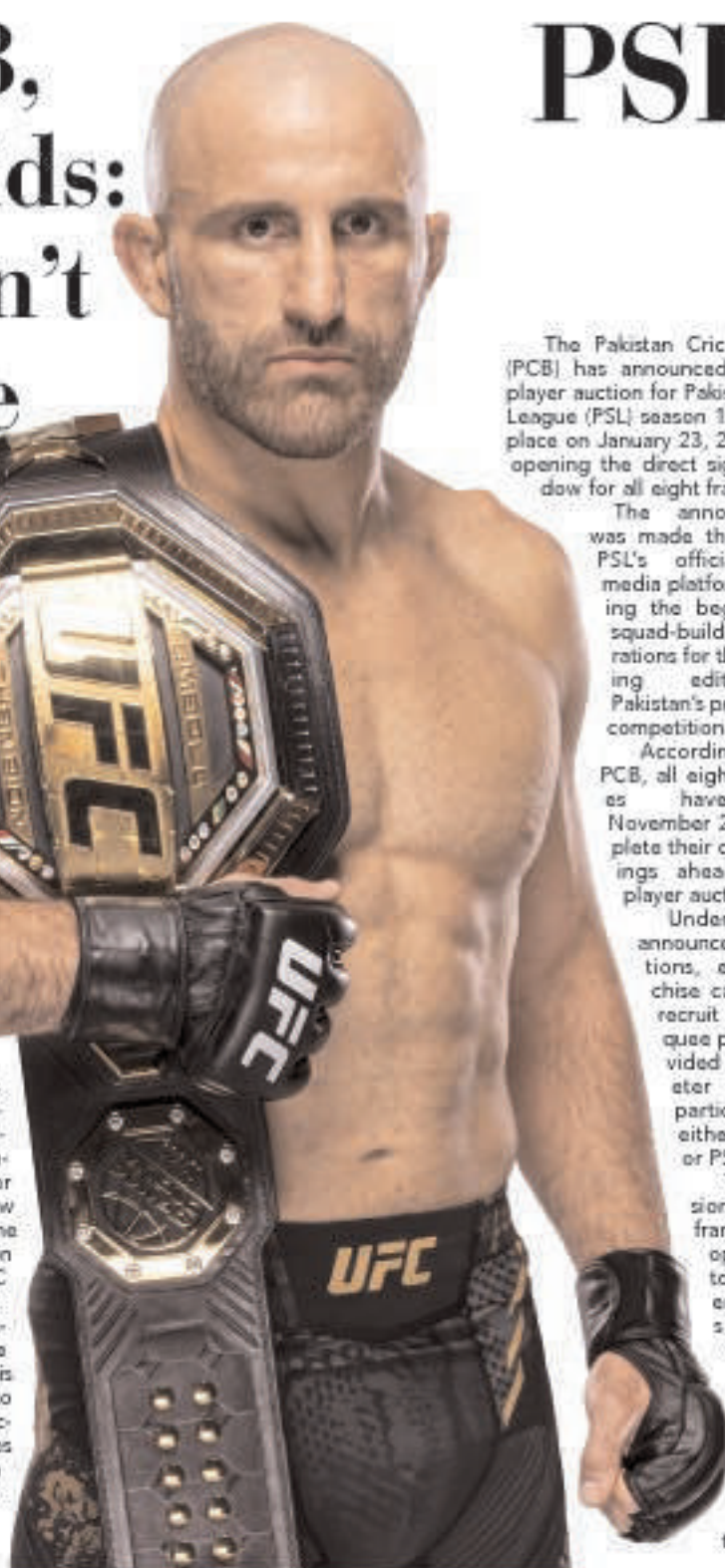
hard-won at the UN climate conferences of 2022 and 2023 by developing countries, many of them among the least responsible for climate change yet most vulnerable to its impacts. The fund grew out of calls for "climate reparations" from historically major emitters, which ultimately did not materialize. But since it became operational, critics have faulted both meager pledges from rich nations — \$822 million to date — and the fact no money has been disbursed so far. Wagle said that Nepal is a test case for "how serious the world is in helping developing and fragile countries to respond to the loss and damage associated with climate change." AFP

SPORTS



Volk, 38, Tells Kids: Age Won't Stop Me

Alexander Volkanovski knows the questions about his age will follow him into the octagon. He welcomes them. At 38, the UFC featherweight champion sees another opportunity to demonstrate how much he still has to offer when he faces unbeaten Movsar Evloev on Saturday in the main event of UFC 333 at Etihad Arena in Abu Dhabi. Evloev has spent years imagining that meeting. His confidence rests on beating the champion at his best, rather than waiting for him to decline. Their contrasting perspectives frame a card that also features bantamweight champion Petr Yan defending his belt against Merab Dvalishvili in the third meeting between the rivals. **AP**



PSL 12 Player Auction Date Revealed

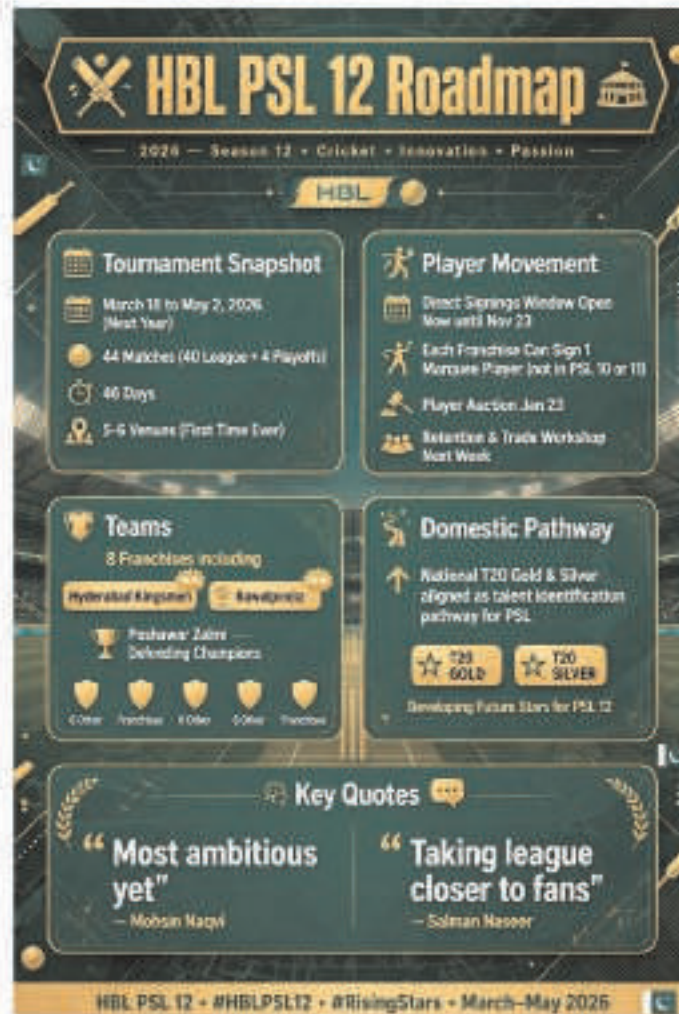
The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has announced that the player auction for Pakistan Super League (PSL) season 12 will take place on January 23, 2027, while opening the direct signing window for all eight franchises.

The announcement was made through the PSL's official social media platforms, marking the beginning of squad-building preparations for the upcoming edition of Pakistan's premier T20 competition.

According to the PCB, all eight franchises have until November 23 to complete their direct signings ahead of the player auction.

Under the announced regulations, each franchise can directly recruit one marquee player, provided the cricketer did not participate in either PSL 10 or PSL 11.

The provision offers franchises an opportunity to strengthen their squads with high-profile players who have not featured in the league



five to six venues across Pakistan as part of the PCB's plans to expand the league's geographical reach.

In another significant development, the cricket board has aligned its domestic cricket calendar with the PSL's pre-season preparations to create more opportunities for emerging players.

The National T20 Gold and National T20 Silver tournaments will serve as talent-identification competitions ahead of the January auction.

The initiative is aimed at providing promising domestic cricketers with an opportunity to impress PSL franchises and potentially progress towards national selection.

PCB chairman Mohsin Naqvi expressed optimism about the upcoming edition, describing it as the league's most ambitious season.

"PSL is Pakistan cricket's biggest stage, and Season 12 will be its most ambitious yet. PSL 11 ended before a record crowd, and we are building on that momentum by taking the league to more cities than ever before," Naqvi said.

"The roadmap we have finalised and are partially announcing today gives every stakeholder, from franchises and players to commercial partners and broadcasters, the certainty to plan at the highest level. With the foundations now in place, we are looking forward to an exciting season," he added.

PSL chief executive Salman Naseer also highlighted the importance of taking the tournament to additional cities, allowing more cricket fans to experience the competition. **AP**

AFC Backs Infantino Despite Earlier 'Breach Of Trust' Row



The Asian Football Confederation has endorsed Gianni Infantino for another term as FIFA president in an apparent turnaround in its stance from two months ago when it criticized the head of soccer's world governing body for a breach of trust.

AFC president Sheikh Salman bin Ibrahim Al Khalifa, speaking at the body's extraordinary congress meeting in Tokyo on Friday, embraced Infantino with a large hug in front of the membership as he delivered his endorsement.

"We affirm our full commitment to supporting you and your leadership as you seek a new mandate as the FIFA president," Sheikh Salman said. "You've visited a lot of countries in Asia. I've spoken to a lot of members within this continent. I know your feeling and I think your commitment is clear as well."

The AFC has 47 member associations. Even if all the members don't follow the direction of Sheikh Salman, those votes could be a key to guaranteeing another mandate for Infantino.

The FIFA election is in March and the deadline for candidates to file against Infantino is Nov. 18. So far none has filed. Addressing his remarks to Infantino, Sheikh Salman indicated not every AFC member would go along with the endorsement, but most will. **AP**

Pakistan, Iran Set Up BJK Cup Group III Final

Pakistan and Iran have qualified for the final of the Billie Jean King Cup Asia/Oceania Group III after securing victories in their respective group ties.

The two teams will face each other on Saturday, October 24 here at the Pakistan Tennis Federation (PTF) Tennis Complex, Garden Avenue.

Pakistan secured their place in the final with a 2-1 victory over top seed Maldives in Group A, while Iran booked their spot with a convincing 3-0 win against Qatar in Group B.

Pakistan's experienced players delivered strong performances in the singles matches. Ushna Suhail defeated Keyara Usama 6-2, 6-3, while Mahin Aftab Qureshi produced an impressive display to overcome Aishath Karim Saizan 6-1, 6-0. In the doubles, Romaisha Malik and Hajra Sohail went down fighting against Aishath Karim Saizan and Nayara Usama Ali, losing 4-6, 4-6.

Iran, meanwhile, demonstrated their strength against Qatar, winning all three matches. Yasaman Yazdani defeated Dana Khalifa 6-0, 6-0, while Kimia Sagheb Tehrani beat Mubarak Al Naimi 6-2, 6-1. The Iranian doubles pairing of Meshkatolzahra Safi and Hana Soltani completed the clean sweep with a 6-2, 7-6(2) victory over Hind Almudahka and Khadija Gassama.

The stage is now set for an exciting final between Pakistan and Iran, with both teams aiming to finish their campaign on a high note.

Pakistan will look to capitalise on home-court advantage and the support of local fans, while Iran will be determined to challenge the hosts for the Group III title. **NEWS DESK**

Goalkeeper Jorge Muslera saved three penalties to help Estudiantes de La Plata overcome a second-half red card Thursday and eliminate defending champion Flamengo to secure a spot in the Copa Libertadores final. Following two goalless draws in the series, the 40-year-old Uruguayan veteran — who played in five World Cups — denied penalty attempts from Jorginho, Lucas Paqueta, and Bruno Henrique to lead the Argentine side to a 3-2 shootout victory.

Estudiantes, reduced to 10 men in the 50th minute when Baltasar Rodriguez was sent off, will now face Palmeiras in the final at Uruguay's Centenario Stadium on Nov. 28.

The Argentine club will aim to break a seven-year streak of consecutive tournament victories by Brazilian teams in South America's premier club competition.

The last non-Brazilian club to lift the trophy was Argentina's River Plate in 2018. **AP**

Muslera rescues 10-man Estudiantes

LeBron's Anthem Warm-Up Enrages Trump



US President Donald Trump lashed out at NBA superstar LeBron James on Thursday for what he called disrespectful behavior during the playing of the national anthem. Trump posted a video of the basketball legend doing apparent warm-up movements while lined-up with his Philadelphia 76ers teammates.

"While listening to our National Anthem, LeBron James disrespects our Country! I said right from the beginning that he's no good, a TOTAL DISGRACE," Trump wrote on his Truth Social network. "LeBron James should apologize to all of those Great American Warriors and Heroes who died for the American Flag, and all that our Country stands for!" he wrote. The video used by Trump had an internal caption that read:

"LeBron working on his golf swing pregame." It showed him doing lateral swing motions and basketball shooting movements. It was not immediately clear when the video was filmed. **AP**

Cummins Weighs Axe After Innings Thrashing



Australia will have some hard decisions to make over the weekend as they lick their wounds after a bruising loss in the second Test against South Africa and consider their line-up for the series-deciding clash next week.

Defeat by 7an innings and 31 runs in Gqeberha has left several players' places in jeopardy and given the selectors plenty to ponder before the third Test starts in Cape Town on Tuesday.

Australia are not known for making knee-jerk changes after a defeat, and captain Pat Cummins was circumspect on the topic after the loss at St George's Park.

"It's always that delicate balance," he said of a "potential switch in personnel."

"Do you feel like someone's just about to turn the corner and they're going to be away? Or does it now feel like the right time for change? So that's what will be spoken about in the next few days."

"We'll probably have Cam Green and Josh Inglis available for next week. I'm sure their names will get thrown around when we try to work out an eleven," he told reporters on Thursday.

The debate is likely to include Marnus Labuschagne, who has scored 37 twice, 14 and 39 in his four innings in the two Tests in South Africa this month. He has not made a Test century since scoring 111 against England at Old Trafford in July 2023. "The hardest thing about opening or batting No. 3 is actually getting yourself in. So he's actually doing the hard bit. He's getting to thirties," Cummins added. **REUTERS**

