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Pakistan to observe Kashmir Black Day on Oct 27 with nationwide, global events

STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD

Pakistan is preparing to observe Kashmir Black Day on October 27 with events nationwide and at its diplomatic missions abroad to condemn India's occupation of Jammu and Kashmir, reaffirm solidarity with the Kashmiri people and renew calls for their right to self-determination.

Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs, Gilgit-Baltistan and SAFRON Engineer Amir Muqam chaired a high-level meeting at the Azad Jammu and Kashmir Council in Islamabad on Wednesday to finalize arrangements for the annual observance.

The meeting was attended by Prime Minister's Coordinator on Kashmir Affairs Shabbir Ahmed Usmani, Secretary for Kashmir Affairs, Gilgit-Baltistan and SAFRON Syed Zafar Ali Shah, Additional Secretary Kamran Rehman Khan, senior officials, representatives of relevant ministries and institutions, and All Parties Hurriyat Conference Azad Jammu and Kashmir (APHC-AJK) chapter General Secretary Advocate Parvez Ahmed Shah.

Amir Muqam paid tribute to the people of Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) for their continued struggle for their rights and political aspirations. He said the observance would draw international attention to the Kashmir dispute and reaffirm Pakistan's support for a peaceful and just resolution.

MUZAFFARABAD: Prime Minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir Iftikhar Gilani is presiding over a high-level meeting.

AJK PM orders strict quality control, transparency in development projects

- Iftikhar Gilani directs departments to ensure timely completion and efficient use of resources

STAFF REPORTER

MUZAFFARABAD

Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Prime Minister Iftikhar Gilani has directed the relevant departments to ensure quality, transparency and adherence to prescribed timelines in all development projects, stressing that no compromise would be made on the quality or pace of development work.

He expressed these views while chairing a high-level meeting attended by Health Minister Dr. Mustafa Bashir, Additional Chief Secretary Development Atif Rehman, Principal Secretary Adnan Khurshid, Secretary Communications and Works Khawaja Muhammad Naeem, and Secretary Planning and Development Aamir Latif.

Addressing the meeting, the prime minister directed that a comprehensive implementation mechanism, including completion periods and clear timelines, be established for every development project before work begins. He said advance planning was essential to ensure that projects were completed within their stipulated timeframes.

Gilani emphasized that the success of development initiatives should be measured by their timely completion and the tangible benefits they deliver to the public. He instructed the concerned departments to regularly review project progress and ensure that allocated funds and other resources were utilized efficiently and transparently.

The prime minister further directed that contracts for development projects be awarded to reputable firms and contractors with sound professional credentials and satisfactory performance records.

He made it clear that the pace and quality of development work would not be compromised under any circumstances. The relevant departments, he said, must ensure that all projects meet prescribed standards and that their benefits reach the people.

Gilani stressed the need to design development projects while keeping future requirements in view, underscoring the importance of effective planning, accountability and sustainable outcomes in public-sector development initiatives.

The meeting was attended by Minister for Health Dr. Mustafa Bashir, Additional Chief Secretary Development Atif Rehman, Principal Secretary Adnan Khurshid, Secretary Communication and Works Khawaja Muhammad Naeem and Secretary Planning and Development Amir Latif.

Rana Sanaullah Warns Parties Staying Out Of Fight Against Terrorism Will Be Minus

- PM's adviser says the whole nation must stand together, as the federal government pushes to restore peace and progress in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD

Adviser to the Prime Minister on Political Affairs Rana Sanaullah has said that the whole country must stand together in the fight against terrorism. On Friday, he made it clear that any party staying away from this goal will be left behind.

He spoke on Geo News programme "Geo Pakistan." The host asked him about the long-term political future of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He was also asked if PTI would keep its role in the province or be treated as "minus."

The PML-N senator gave a short and direct answer. He said those who do not join the agenda to end terrorism will be minus.

Sanaullah said ending terrorism is the top priority of the government. In his view, the lives of ordinary people cannot get better until this problem is solved.

He added that a party which does not stand with the security forces with a full heart will also be pushed aside. His message was simple: peace comes first, and politics comes after.

His words came one day after Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif chaired a federal apex committee meeting in Peshawar. The meeting reviewed the security situation in the province.

DPM Dar Departs For Istanbul Ahead Of R4, R4+E3 Ministerial Meetings

STAFF REPORTER/WEB DESK

ISLAMABAD

Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Ishaq Dar left for Istanbul on Friday to attend the R4 and R4+E3 ministerial meetings. The R4 group includes Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Turkiye and Egypt.

Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan invited Dar to the R4 Foreign Ministers' Meeting, which takes place in Istanbul today.

A second session will follow. In it, the R4 ministers will sit with their counterparts from the United Kingdom, France and Germany, known as the E3.

This is the first time these seven countries are meeting in this format. Turkiye took the lead in setting it up, according to a Turkish diplomatic source quoted by Reuters.

The talks come at a tense time. Wars involving Iran, Yemen and Ukraine are putting shipping routes and regional security at risk.

President AJK pays tribute to Kashmir freedom martyrs on foundation day

- Dr. Muhammad Najib Khan calls for just and peaceful settlement of Kashmir dispute

STAFF REPORTER

MUZAFFARABAD

Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) President Dr. Muhammad Najib Khan has said that October 24 is not merely a commemorative day but a symbol of sacrifice, determination, courage and the historic struggle waged by the region's forefathers for freedom.

In his special message on the occasion of the Foundation Day of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, the president said the establishment of the Azad Government of the State of Jammu and Kashmir on October 24, 1947, was the outcome of immense sacrifices made by the people in their struggle for freedom, dignity and the right to self-determination.

He paid tribute to the martyrs, freedom fighters and founders of Azad Kashmir who sacrificed their lives to keep the flame of freedom alive.

Dr. Najib Khan said the Foundation Day also served as a reminder that the fundamental objective of the Kashmir freedom movement remained unfulfilled. He described Azad Jammu and Kashmir as a sacred trust of the Kashmir freedom movement and stressed that the people of the region must never forget their brothers and sisters in Indian-administered Jammu and Kashmir, who continue their struggle for fundamental rights and self-determination.

The president saluted the resilience, courage and sacrifices of the people of Indian-administered Jammu and Kashmir, reaffirming solidarity with their legitimate aspirations.

He called on the international community, particularly the United Nations, to fulfil its responsibilities and play an effective role in securing a just and peaceful resolution of the Kashmir dispute, enabling the Kashmiri people to exercise their right to self-determination in accordance with relevant UN resolutions.

He maintained that lasting peace, stability and prosperity in South Asia could only be achieved through a just settlement of the Kashmir dispute.

The AJK president said national unity, the supremacy of the constitution and law, strong institutions and public service were essential foundations for a stable and prosperous society.

Remembering the sacrifices of the martyrs, he urged the people to renew their commitment to their ideals by safeguarding freedom, strengthening institutions, protecting citizens' rights and laying the groundwork for a better, safer and more prosperous future for coming generations.

"Our destination is peace, our path is guided by principles and justice, and our struggle will continue until the Kashmiri people achieve their legitimate and internationally recognised right to self-determination," the president said.

Gwadar operation: forces kill 10 terrorists, civilian martyred in Balochistan

- Military says clearance work in Gwadar city and the Gabd border area ended without any loss to security forces

STAFF REPORTER

GWADAR

A Gwadar operation by security forces has ended with ten terrorists killed, the military's media wing said on Friday. One civilian also lost his life during the attacks.

The Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said the incidents took place on October 22, 2026. The attackers tried to carry out terror activities near the Gabd Border Crossing and in Gwadar city.

The ISPR blamed a group it calls "Fitna al-Hindustan" and described it as India-sponsored. These claims come from the military statement and have not been independently verified.

According to the ISPR, the attackers wanted to harm the people they claim to represent. It said they also wanted to block the development and progress of Balochistan.

To protect local residents, security forces started clearance operations in and around Gwadar city. The ISPR said the troops responded to the attackers in separate engagements.

The military said ten terrorists died in the exchange of fire. One of them was a woman.

One civilian was martyred in the attacks, and a few vehicles were damaged. The ISPR said there was no loss to security forces during the operation.

The statement said order was restored once the clearance work was complete. It did not share the name of the civilian or give more details about the damaged vehicles.

The military also spoke strongly about the woman among the attackers. It said forcing a Baloch woman to take part in an attack is a crime against the state. It also called it an insult to the honour of Baloch women.

In its view, the group used the woman as a tool for propaganda. The ISPR said the aim was to stir up public anger and give the campaign a false sense of respect.

The military added that such tactics go against Baloch and Islamic traditions. It said these traditions hold women in the highest regard.

Aseefa Bhutto, Abdul Qadir Patel mock 5G rollout over slow internet in Pakistan

- Aseefa Bhutto Zardari criticized the government after the IT parliamentary secretary failed to explain 5G in parliament

STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD

Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) leader Aseefa Bhutto Zardari and Abdul Qadir Patel took a dig at the government's 5G rollout plans during a National Assembly session, questioning the poor state of internet services across the country.

During the question hour, lawmakers criticised the parliamentary secretary and the Ministry of Information Technology over slow internet speeds and poor mobile signals across Pakistan.

Aseefa Bhutto Zardari expressed concern over the state of internet services, saying neither 4G nor 5G was working properly in Nawabshah and other parts of the country. She stressed the need to improve internet speed and service quality for all sectors, including the business community.

When Parliamentary Secretary for IT Sabeen Ghauri failed to explain the meaning and details of 5G, Aseefa Bhutto sarcastically offered to explain the technology to her.

"If the parliamentary secretary does not know what 5G means, she can come and sit with us, and we will explain it to her," Aseefa said.

Naqvi Cybercrime Warning: Women Urged Not To Share Photos Online

- The interior minister also asked citizens not to send money to strangers online, while the NCCIA faces a staff shortage in Punjab

STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD

Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi has pledged full government support to the National Cyber Crime Investigation Agency (NCCIA), revealing that the agency has traced a $6 million fraud case amid rising complaints of online scams, harassment and cyber blackmailing.

Speaking at a press conference at the NCCIA zonal headquarters in Lahore on Friday, Naqvi said the agency had arrested suspects in several high-profile cases.

He acknowledged that the NCCIA lacked powers equivalent to those of the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA), adding that efforts were underway to strengthen its workforce and improve complaint resolution. The minister called for a public awareness campaign against cybercrime, urging women not to share pictures with strangers and warning people against sending money to anyone making suspicious online demands. He said criminals used women's pictures and videos to blackmail them.

Highlighting the severity of online harassment, Naqvi said cases involving young girls were frequently being reported and revealed that he had met three girls who had attempted suicide.

CTD Arrests Three Terrorists In Karachi, Foils Major Attack Plot

STAFF REPORTER
KARACHI

Security forces in Karachi have stopped a big attack plan and arrested three terrorists in a joint action.

The Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) carried out the operation with an intelligence agency. Officials say the team moved quickly and caught the suspects before they could act.

According to details, the group wanted to hit a sensitive location in the city. Their plan failed because the security forces took action at the right time.

Two of the arrested men belong to the banned Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA). The third is linked to the outlawed Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP).

Officials identified two of the suspects as Rahim Fazal and Balach Baloch.

A large amount of weapons was found with them. The recovered items include IEDs, hand grenades and other arms.

Earlier, on October 13, 2026, the CTD arrested three suspects from the TTP and BLA in separate raids in Karachi.

A CTD spokesperson said two hand grenades and one IED were taken from them. He added that a raid near Lasbela Chowk led to the arrest of two suspected BLA members.

They were named as Sajid Yusuf and Shaukat Ali, also known as Shoki. The spokesperson said these suspects stayed in constant contact with their handlers. They were planning bomb attacks on sensitive buildings and law enforcement agencies.

Officials believe the quick action saved many lives. Investigators are now questioning the suspects to learn more about their network.

Polio workers honoured to protect children

STAFF REPORTER
ISLAMABAD

A special appreciation ceremony was held to recognize the dedication and contributions of frontline polio workers in protecting children and supporting Pakistan's efforts to eradicate the disease.

During the ceremony, Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) Coordinator Inam Ulhaque presented certificates of recognition and gifts to frontline workers in appreciation of their commitment and tireless efforts towards polio eradication.

The ceremony highlighted the critical role of frontline workers in reaching children with polio vaccines and strengthening immunisation efforts across the country.

The EOC coordinator appreciated their dedication, emphasizing that their continued efforts were essential to protecting children and achieving a polio-free Pakistan.

Aror University launches international winter camp 2027 in Islamabad

STAFF REPORTER
ISLAMABAD

Aror University of Art, Architecture, Design and Heritage Sukkur, launched its International Winter School/Camp 2027 at Islamabad Club in collaboration with the Higher Education Commission (HEC) and the Inter-University Consortium for the Promotion of Social Sciences Pakistan (IUCPSS).

Speaking on the occasion, Prof. Dr. Zahid Hussain Khand, Vice Chancellor of Aror University, said the two-week programme would promote international collaboration, cultural exchange and academic partnerships.

He said the initiative reflected Aror University's commitment to providing students with meaningful international exposure and connecting them with scholars, institutions and cultural communities from different countries.

He added that the Winter School/Camp would offer participants opportunities to explore Pakistan's diverse cultural heritage while engaging in academic discussions, creative activities and collaborative learning.

Such programmes, he noted, help students develop broader perspectives, strengthen communication skills and appreciate cultural diversity.

High Commissioner of Mauritius Munsoo Kurimbaccus welcomed the initiative and observed that educational and cultural exchanges play an important role in strengthening mutual understanding and friendly relations among nations.

Prof. Dr. Habib Ali Bokhari, Member (R&D and Academics), HEC, appreciated the initiative and highlighted the importance of international partnerships, research collaboration and global exposure for students.

A vendor displayed quilts, mattress and warm clothes attraction for customers at his roadside workplace, in the city.

Pakistan seeks trade corridors to Central Asia via China: Aleem Khan

- Pakistan, Azerbaijan Discuss Expanding Trade, Infrastructure Cooperation And Regional Connectivity Corridors

STAFF REPORTER
ISLAMABAD

Federal Minister for Communications Abdul Aleem Khan on Friday said Pakistan was keen to develop trade corridors to Central Asian countries through China to strengthen regional connectivity and expand trade opportunities.

He expressed these views during a meeting with newly appointed Azerbaijani Ambassador to Pakistan Irfan Davudov, who called on him here, said a press release.

Abdul Aleem Khan warmly welcomed Ambassador Irfan Davudov on his appointment to Pakistan, extending his heartiest congratulations and best wishes for a successful diplomatic tenure.

Discussions were held on areas of mutual interest. Enhancement of bilateral relations, trade, and infrastructure cooperation also came under discussion. A firm commitment was expressed to further strengthen the long-standing friendly relations between Pakistan and Azerbaijan from both sides.

Detailed discussions were held on expanding bilateral trade, economic cooperation and joint ventures, particularly in the communications and infrastructure sectors.

Highlighting strategic trade opportunities, Federal Minister Abdul Aleem Khan emphasized that Pakistan is keen to develop trade corridors reaching Central Asian Republics via China.

He stressed that a robust transportation network and modern infrastructure are essential for enhancing regional connectivity and facilitating smooth trade flows. "There is an imperative need to explore new avenues for mutual trade and investment with Azerbaijan," stated Abdul Aleem Khan.

Recalling his recent visit to Azerbaijan with fond memories, the Minister expressed high expectations for future collaboration, adding that Pakistan desires to further expand bilateral cooperation across various economic sectors where vast potential exists.

Azerbaijan's newly appointed Ambassador Irfan Davudov expressed Azerbaijan's strong commitment to enhancing mutual cooperation and consolidating diplomatic and economic ties with Pakistan.

Exchanging warm pleasantries, the Ambassador assured that he would build upon the strong foundation and traditions established by his predecessors.

KP governor's rule must deliver peace, says Punjab governor

- Governor Urges Effective Implementation Of Counterterrorism Policy For Lasting Peace

STAFF REPORTER
PESHAWAR

Punjab Governor Sardar Saleem Haider Khan said the benefits of governor's rule in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa must be visible to the public through a reduction in terrorism and the restoration of peace in the province.

Speaking to journalists at Parliament House, the governor said the elimination of terrorism required continuity in government policies and strict implementation of the National Action Plan.

He said a comprehensive counterterrorism policy had already been formulated and must be implemented effectively to address security challenges.

Saleem Haider said consistent implementation of decisions taken by the Apex Committee was essential for eliminating terrorism and establishing lasting peace.

He said the period of governor's rule in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa must produce tangible results, particularly in improving the security situation and reducing terrorist activities.

Responding to questions about alleged extrajudicial killings in

Punjab, the governor said he was unaware of any such cases in the province.

He said he also had no information about anyone approaching the courts over allegations of extrajudicial killings.

Referring to development in the provinces, Saleem Haider said the public would decide through their votes whether provincial governments had delivered development.

He said it was not the responsibility of a governor to issue certificates regarding the development performance of any province.

Jamaat-e-Islami continues protest drive against petroleum levy in Lahore

STAFF REPORTER
LAHORE

Jamaat-e-Islami staged a sit-in outside the Lahore Press Club as part of the third round of its protest movement against the petroleum levy, with party workers and members of the public participating.

The protesters vowed to continue their campaign until the petroleum levy is abolished. They warned that if the tax is not withdrawn, the party would resume its "Super March" from Multan.

Meanwhile, Jamaat-e-Islami is also conducting a signature campaign across Lahore to mobilise public support against the petroleum levy.

IESCO notifies power suspension programme

STAFF REPORTER
ISLAMABAD

The Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) on Friday issued a power suspension programme for Sunday on limited feeders due to ongoing development works being carried out by the district administration.

According to an IESCO spokesperson, electricity supply will remain suspended in Islamabad Circle from 09:00 AM to 02:00 PM: CNS Lab, N-LAB-1, O-Lab, CNS-1, PINSTECH-3, Tumair, New Lab-3, Simly Dam, Nilop, PINSTECH Colony, Jhang Syedan, Frash Town, PARR-2, Pehount, Chirah, New Lab-2, PINSTECH-1, Secretariat-III, Secretariat-IV, Jinnah Super, NIC, State Life, Saudi Pak Tower, Stock Exchange, F-7/2, Shamas, F-6/1 (Loop), Babul Islam, PTET, Parbat Road feeders.

In Rawalpindi City Circle power supply will remain suspended from 07:00 AM to 02:00 PM: Qadeer Road, Al-Noor Colony Feeders, from 09:00 AM to 02:00 PM: Tehmasma Abad, Dhoke Hukamdad, Sector 4, A.P.H.S feeders.

In Rawalpindi Cantt Circle electricity supply will remain suspended from 09:00 AM to 02:00 PM: Dhoke Farman, Tipu Road, Chaklala, Takbeer-1, Rawalpindi-III, Fauji Foundation Hospital, V.I.P, RCCI-VII, Humayun Road feeders, from 09:00 AM to 05:00 PM: New GHQ feeder.

In Jhelum Circle power supply will remain suspended from 09:00 AM to 02:00 PM: F-7 (Kutchery), Abbas Pura, Ajmal Shaheed, Sector-A, Bandral, Sector-C, Sang, Jarikas feeder, from 12:00 PM to 02:00 PM: Feeder-B, Feeder-F, SHAH PUR, Mangla Metal Feeders. In Chakwal Circle power supply will remain suspended from 07:00 AM to 02:00 PM: Al-Qaim Mill, Karyala, K.S.M. Unit-3, Mureed, Bhoun feeders, from 09:00 AM to 02:00 PM: PAF. In GSO Circle power supply will remain suspended from 07:00 AM to 06:00 PM

HSA, WHO consult experts on SRHR competency framework

STAFF REPORTER
ISLAMABAD

World Health Organization (WHO) and the Health Services Academy (HSA) have convened an expert consultation to finalize a Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) competency framework for nursing, midwifery, public health and pharmacy graduates.

Held at HSA, the consultation focused on preparing health professionals to provide quality, equitable, person-centred and rights-based care while upholding confidentiality, informed decision-making, dignity and ethical standards.

The expert panel was headed by Dr Samina Naeem Khalid, who facilitated discussions on strengthening the framework and ensuring its relevance to Pakistan's healthcare and education systems.

The consultation brought together experts from medical universities, healthcare institutions and development organisations, including Prof. Dr Syeda Batool Mazhar, Prof. Dr Naila Azam, Ms Ayesha Salma of Ipas, Dr Batool Ali of Jhpiego, Dr Saima Zubair, Prof. Dr Khola Noreen, Prof. Dr Sajida Naseem, Prof. Dr Muhammad Tahir Aqeel and nursing and midwifery representatives.

Participants reviewed proposed revisions, discussed interprofessional collaboration and referral pathways, and identified outstanding technical issues requiring further consideration.

The consultation also outlined the next steps for technical validation, formal endorsement and integration of the framework into pre-service education.

OGDC tops Transparency International Pakistan's 2026 ranking

● TIP report emphasises that comprehensive corporate disclosure is important for strengthening investor confidence

FINANCE REPORTER

KARACHI

Oil and Gas Development Company (OGDC) has secured first position among 104 listed companies in Transparency International Pakistan's 2026 report, achieving an overall score of 92.71% in transparency and corporate reporting.

According to an OGDC spokesperson, the company secured a 100% score in anti-corruption programs, reflecting its performance in the assessment of corporate transparency.

The spokesperson said OGDC also achieved a 100% score in organizational transparency and financial reporting.

The company secured a 100% score in gender equality, non-discrimination and the inclusion of persons with disabilities, according to the spokesperson.

OGDC also achieved a 100% score in procurement practices related to government contracts and tenders, securing the top position in this category.

The spokesperson said the company obtained an 81.25% score in human rights and corporate responsibility.

In Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) reporting, OGDC secured a score of 75%.

The spokesperson said OGDC ranked first among the 104 listed companies assessed in Transparency International Pakistan's 2026 report, with an overall transparency and corporate reporting score of 92.71%.

In the human rights and CSR category, only Fauji Cement achieved full transparency in its disclosures, while 11 companies were classified as significantly transparent. The assessment examined areas including human rights due diligence, child labour prevention, employee safety, wage payment mechanisms and grievance procedures.

The report also highlighted weaknesses in corporate anti-corruption disclosures, particularly in relation to staff training, communication of policies and reporting mechanisms for corruption-related concerns. OGDC, Fatima Fertiliser Company Limited, Pakistan Tobacco Company Limited and Lucky Core Industries Limited recorded the highest scores in this category.

However, a comparison of the 63 companies assessed in both the current and previous editions offered a more encouraging picture. Their average overall score increased from 72.01% to 78.45%, representing an improvement of approximately 8.9%. The report attributed the progress to better performance on assessment questions that remained unchanged between the two editions.

The assessment was based on publicly available information, including companies' latest annual reports for 2024 and 2025, official websites and other public documents. It examined eight areas of corporate disclosure, including anti-corruption programmes, organisational transparency, country-by-country reporting, domestic financial reporting, procurement relating to government contracts, human rights, gender and disability inclusion, and ESG disclosures.

Transparency International Pakistan noted that the assessment measures the extent of information companies disclose rather than whether they actually implement the policies they report. A low score, therefore, does not necessarily establish unethical conduct, just as a high score does not guarantee effective implementation.

Gold falls Rs7,000 per tola, silver prices decline in Pakistan

FINANCE REPORTER

KARACHI

Gold and silver prices declined in international and local markets, with gold falling by Rs7,000 per tola and silver dropping by Rs221 per tola in Pakistan.

In the international market, gold prices decreased by $70 per ounce, bringing the price down to $4,020 per ounce.

In the local market, the price of gold fell by Rs7,000 per tola to Rs424,536.

Similarly, the price of 10 grams of gold decreased by Rs6,001 to Rs363,652.

Silver prices also recorded a decline in the local market, with the price per tola falling by Rs221 to Rs5,865.

Banks urged to remove SME credit hurdles

FINANCE REPORTER

ISLAMABAD

Adviser to Prime Minister for Industries and Production Haroon Akhtar Khan has called on banks and the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) to give due consideration to the financing challenges faced by SME clusters and take effective measures to address them as limited access to credit remains a major constraint on growth of many viable businesses.

The adviser held a consultative session with representatives of small and medium enterprises (SMEs), business clusters, banks, the State Bank and relevant government departments to address the challenges faced by businesses in accessing affordable and timely financing.

The representatives of various SME clusters highlighted the funding constraints and procedural hurdles affecting their businesses, including difficulties in obtaining credit and gaining access to suitable financing facilities to expand operations, meet working capital requirements and capitalise on emerging opportunities.

Khan stated that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had directed that financing for SMEs be doubled, underscoring the government's commitment to expanding access to credit and strengthening the role of SMEs in the national economy.

PBS Weekly Inflation Rises 0.65 Percent As LPG Prices Jump

● Annual inflation climbs to 11.85 percent as LPG, chicken and onions get costlier, while tomatoes and petrol become cheaper

CHAUDHARY MUDASSER

ISLAMABAD

The latest PBS weekly inflation data shows that prices went up by 0.65 percent in the week ended October 22, 2026. The jump was mainly caused by costlier LPG, chicken and onions.

The Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) said the rise reversed last week's fall of 0.04 percent. On a yearly basis, inflation also moved higher, from 11.38 percent to 11.85 percent.

LPG saw the biggest weekly increase, at 22.44 percent. The average price of an 11.67-kilogram cylinder went up from Rs5,154.16 to Rs6,310.76 in just one week.

Chicken also became much more expensive. Live chicken rose by 12.20 percent, from Rs395.98 to Rs444.27 per kilogram.

Onion prices went up by 4.19 percent. They moved from Rs180.99 to Rs188.57 per kilogram.

Other items also cost more. Shirting rose 1.86 percent, plain bread 1.66 percent and wheat flour 1 percent. A 20-kilogram bag of flour now costs Rs2,976.12, up from Rs2,946.72.

Garlic, firewood, georgette, vegetable ghee, beef and pulse mash also saw small increases of less than one percent.

Some relief came from falling prices. Tomatoes had the biggest drop, at 21.99 percent. Their average price came down from Rs119.43 to Rs93.17 per kilogram.

Fuel prices also went down. Petrol fell 3.63 percent to Rs381.67 per litre, while diesel dropped 1.68 percent to Rs392.17 per litre.

Bananas, potatoes, gram, eggs, powdered milk, broken basmati rice and sugar also became cheaper this week.

The bureau tracks 51 essential items. Of these, 19 items, or 37.25 percent, became more expensive. Twelve items, or 23.53 percent, got cheaper, and 20 items, or 39.22 percent, stayed the same.

Compared with the same week last year, the picture is much harder for families. LPG is up 107.12 percent and onions are up 72.81 percent. Electricity for the lowest-use group is up 58.59 percent.

Petrol is 44.17 percent higher than last year, and diesel is up 41.56 percent. Chicken is 38.99 percent costlier, while wheat flour has risen 36.49 percent.

Not everything went up over the year. Tomatoes are 71.72 percent cheaper than last year. Potatoes are down 40.75 percent, sugar 25 percent and eggs 22.14 percent.

The data also shows how different households are affected.

The highest-spending group saw weekly inflation of 0.74 percent and yearly inflation of 12.69 percent.

For the lowest-spending group, with monthly spending of up to Rs17,732, prices rose 0.51 percent in the week and 8.45 percent over the year.

The second group recorded 0.49 percent weekly and 10.37 percent yearly inflation. The third group saw 0.54 percent and 9.33 percent. The fourth group saw 0.56 percent and 9.90 percent.

The combined Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI) rose to 374.84 points. It was 372.43 points a week ago and 335.14 points in the same week last year. The PBS collects prices of the 51 items from 50 markets in 17 cities. The aim is to track short-term changes in the cost of living.

Oil nears $115 with stocks mixed on earnings, AI

NEWS DESK

BRENT NORTH SEA

Oil prices traded at five-month highs Friday, with benchmark crude contract Brent North Sea near $115 a barrel, as the Middle East conflict raged on.

Stock markets mostly dropped in Europe following some poorly-received earnings from Gucci parent Kering and Swedish group Volvo Cars.

Asian equity indices closed out the week mixed as technology firms managed to claw back some of the week's hefty losses.

Global markets were contending "with concerns around surging oil prices and the sustainability of AI spending", noted AJ Bell head of financial analysis Danni Hewson.

"Oil is at five-month highs amid speculation there may be renewed US-Israeli strikes after next month's US midterm elections.

"Escalating tensions in Ukraine and the prospect of increased energy demand as the northern hemisphere heads into the winter months are only adding to the upwards pressure on oil and gas prices," Hewson added.

Rising energy prices have influenced movements across stock markets in recent days along with developments in the AI sector.

Facebook-parent Meta and chip equipment maker Lam Research saw their share prices dive this week despite above-forecast earnings for the pair.

"Strong results are no longer enough if the outlook fails to match an already demanding valuation," noted Fawad Razaqzada, a markets analyst at traders FOREX.com.

"Investors are becoming much less forgiving."

Non-AI companies have also seen their share prices slump this week.

Kering shed 13 percent in Paris midday deals on Friday after the French luxury group published results that failed to reassure investors about a turnaround at its key Gucci brand.

Volvo Cars meanwhile plunged more than 25 percent after it said US tariffs and strong competition from local brands in China pushed it into a third-quarter loss.

LPG prices may drop by Rs30-40 as Iranian supplies resume

FINANCE REPORTER

LAHORE

Liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) prices in Pakistan could fall by up to Rs30 to 40 per kilogram within the next one to two days as the arrival of Iranian LPG consignments is expected to improve domestic supplies.

Ali Haider, convener of the LPG Standing Committee at the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI), said Iranian LPG tankers loaded by October 16 had been allowed to enter Pakistan.

He said the arrival of approximately 900 LPG bowzers could ease supply constraints and bring down prices in the domestic market.

According to Haider, price reductions could begin within the next 24 hours as additional supplies reach the market. However, the expected decline will depend on the timely arrival and distribution of the consignments.

He also called for a review of the Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority's (OGRA) pricing mechanism, arguing that LPG prices should be determined weekly rather than monthly to reflect changing supply conditions and market costs more effectively.

Haider said Pakistan had imported five LPG cargo ships during October, bringing approximately 22,000 tonnes of the fuel into the country.

He put Pakistan's daily LPG demand at 12,000 to 13,000 tonnes, while Karachi alone consumed between 4,000 and 5,000 tonnes daily.

According to him, around 40% of Karachi's LPG consumption was attributed to the commercial sector, while industry accounted for another 30%.

The anticipated price reduction comes amid concerns over high LPG prices and their impact on households, businesses and industrial consumers. LPG remains an important cooking fuel for households without access to reliable piped natural gas supplies.

If the additional consignments reach the market as expected, improved availability could ease pressure on prices. However, the actual reduction will depend on supply distribution, transportation costs and the pricing practices of suppliers and retailers.

The expected decline has not yet been confirmed through an official revised price notification.

IMF sees weak external position

FINANCE REPORTER

ISLAMABAD

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) said on Thursday that Pakistan's external financial position may weaken due to rising imports and moderating remittances, urging exchange rate flexibility to preserve foreign exchange reserves and tighter monetary policy to deal with rising inflation.

The global lender made these observations in its Middle East and Central Asia region report, released on Thursday, a week after the World Bank-IMF annual meetings.

"Over the medium term, external positions should strengthen in Egypt, Jordan and Morocco, supported by lower commodity prices and export diversification, but weaken in Pakistan as imports rise and remittances moderate," according to the IMF.

The fund's remarks came days after it reached a staff-level agreement for disbursement of the $1 billion fifth loan tranche, subject to the government fulfilling prior actions.

The government has projected imports reaching $70 billion this fiscal year and remittances growing to $45.5 billion. The country is struggling to enhance exports, which have not grown despite years of incentives to handpicked exporters.

The IMF has projected Pakistan's current account deficit at 1% of gross domestic product (GDP), or around $4.5 billion, which is also far higher than official estimates of around $2.5 billion. The lender sees Pakistan's gross financing needs at around 22% to 25% of GDP, well above peer countries and carrying risks.

The report points to a very deep nexus between the government and commercial banks, estimating banks' 63% exposure to public debt, also well above typical emerging market levels.

Punjab decides to discontinue 20kg flour bags to prevent smuggling

FINANCE REPORTER

LAHORE

The Punjab government has announced a series of measures to manage essential food supplies, regulate commodity prices and boost agricultural production, including a decision to discontinue 20-kilogram flour bags and make 10-kilogram packs the standard option in market.

Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has instructed authorities to tighten surveillance along provincial borders to prevent the unauthorised movement of wheat and flour.

She also directed deputy commissioners to meet district-level wheat sowing targets and ensure cultivation on government-owned land. Areas covered by the Numberdar system, the Ghori Pal scheme and the "Apna Khet, Apna Rozgar" initiative will also be used for wheat farming under the new instructions.

To prepare for Ramazan, the chief minister ordered district administrations to arrange sufficient supplies of bananas, apples and dates and ensure their sale at regulated prices.

Stocking arrangements are to be planned according to local requirements and available cold storage facilities.

Officials briefed the meeting on price comparisons covering 15 essential commodities, including pulses and vegetables.

The meeting also approved a new initiative titled "Transforming Market Waste into Wealth", aimed at putting market waste to productive use. A separate dehydration project under PAMRA received approval to support the supply of fruits and vegetables outside their usual seasons.

Maryam Nawaz further directed officials to speed up construction of the province's first Mandi Mart for fruit and vegetable trading in Kahna. Authorities were also asked to plan similar facilities in other parts of Punjab.

The midlife blind spot

By Dr Hadia Aziz

Half the world's population will experience menopause, yet it is still spoken of in whispers. The World Health Organisation calls it a natural transition that remains under-recognised and under-supported worldwide. World Menopause Day, observed every year on October 18, should be a moment of reckoning.

Menopause is not a peripheral women's issue but a systemic failure of medicine and public health policy. It affects every woman who lives long enough, yet it remains poorly taught, poorly understood and poorly treated. Until it is recognised as a public health priority, millions of women will continue to be dismissed rather than helped.

Perimenopause and menopause often arrive when women are at their professional and personal peak, managing profound bodily changes alongside life's greatest demands. They may be leading teams, advancing careers, caring for growing children and supporting elderly parents. Poor sleep, exhaustion, and cognitive changes can significantly affect productivity and personal growth. 'Brain fog' can itself become discriminatory when used in workplaces to label women as unproductive. In the UK, one in ten women has reportedly left their jobs due to menopausal symptoms.

Globally, the number of postmenopausal women is growing. In 2021, women aged 50 and above accounted for 26 per cent of the world's female population, approximately 657 million women. In the UK, employers with 250 or more employees can publish action plans addressing gender equality and menopause support, with mandatory plans expected from spring 2027.

In Pakistan, around 8.45 million women are aged 45–54, the age group encompassing the typical menopausal transition. Studies suggest that the average age of menopause in Pakistan is around 47 years, lower than the global average. An observational study among Pakistani women highlights the burden of overlapping physical and psychological symptoms during this transition.

This medical blind spot and cultural stigma are compounded in the country by commercial exploitation. With reliable, evidence-based clinical guidance scarce, vulnerable women are increasingly targeted by unregulated products, from expensive 'hormone teas' and unproven herbal concoctions to custom-compounded bioidentical hormones.

Without rigorous scientific evidence, safety oversight or predictable efficacy, these products may financially exploit women while failing to address their medical needs. Local studies suggest that only 35 per cent of participants sought medical advice, constrained by a lack of guidance, social taboos and fears about hormone therapy side effects.

A 2023 study, published in Menopause, a peer-reviewed journal of The Menopause Society, US, found that only 31.3 per cent of responding OB-GYN residency programmes had a menopause curriculum, and women told it is 'normal to feel this way at her age' are left without help. A dismissal repeated across millions of women is not a lapse in individual judgment; it is a flaw in the system itself. Against this backdrop, Pakistan needs a strong commitment to women's midlife health. Simple, low-cost workplace measures can make a meaningful difference. Temperature-controlled workspaces and access to cold drinking water can help women manage hot flushes, while flexible working hours can assist those experiencing sleep disturbance or fatigue. Task reminders and organisational tools can support women experiencing memory and concentration difficulties.

The Pakistan Menopause Society has a vital role in transforming this landscape. With greater autonomy, institutional support and a clear mandate, professional bodies can help shape national guidelines, train healthcare professionals, lead public awareness campaigns and advocate for menopause-friendly workplace policies.

Pakistan can no longer afford to delay a dedicated National Midlife Women's Health Policy that addresses the peri-menopausal and menopausal years. This should include culturally appropriate guidelines, basic training for primary care doctors and community education through the Lady Health Worker network and Basic Health Units.

Services should address not only symptoms but also osteoporosis, cardiovascular disease, metabolic changes and mental well-being. Dedicated midlife wellness services at Secondary and Tertiary Care Hospitals could offer nutritional counselling, lifestyle support, mental healthcare and appropriate hormone therapy where indicated. Public awareness campaigns through traditional and social media can bring accurate information into homes and help break taboos.

These steps would help women navigate midlife with confidence while reducing the long-term health and economic burden of non-communicable diseases.

By Mudassar Chuhdary

When The Pain Of Children Touched The Corridors Of Power

Scholarships, access to colleges and universities, and pathways into technical and vocational education are equally important.

A student who receives an excellent education at a Danish School may still face a significant obstacle if their family cannot afford the costs of university. It is therefore essential to connect these institutions to a broader and more coherent educational system that supports students from school admission through further education, professional training and entry into working life.

Students should also be equipped with more than the ability to seek employment. They need the skills to conduct research, think creatively, solve problems, establish businesses and adapt to emerging technologies. In an increasingly competitive global economy, nations prosper when their young people are prepared for changing economic conditions and new professional opportunities.

Danish Schools could make an even greater contribution if their students were connected with universities, research institutions, industries and the business community. Such links could help transform the initiative from a means of individual advancement into a broader instrument of economic development and human capital formation.

No worthwhile public initiative can achieve lasting success without continuity. Education is a long-term undertaking, and its results often become visible only after years of sustained effort. A child's intellectual development, personal growth and professional future cannot be secured through short-term planning or occasional announcements.

For Danish Schools, this means regularly assessing educational standards, administration, funding, teacher performance and student outcomes. Admissions should be transparent, information about opportunities should reach eligible families, and the use of public resources should be subject to effective oversight. Parents and the wider public should also be able to understand what the programme is achieving.

It is equally important not to view specialised institutions such as Danish Schools as a substitute for improving Pakistan's wider public education system. It may not be possible to provide every child with a fully resourced residential school, but it should be possible to work towards better teaching, safer environments, essential facilities and improved learning outcomes in ordinary state schools.

The experience gained through Danish Schools could serve as a model for wider educational reform. If successful teaching practices, management systems and student-support mechanisms are adapted for other public schools, the benefits could extend far beyond the students enrolled in the initiative itself.

Ultimately, the programme must become more than an achievement associated with an individual leader or political administration. Its success will depend on the strength of its institutions, the consistency of its standards and the commitment to educational opportunity across successive governments.

Pakistan needs economic stability, social cohesion and new avenues for sustainable development. Each of these objectives depends, to a significant extent, on the capabilities of its people. A country cannot realise its full potential if its children are denied quality education, its young people lack relevant skills, or its talented citizens are unable to find opportunities to progress.

Conversely, when the state treats education as a national investment, recognises the potential of disadvantaged children and provides them with meaningful opportunities, those children can become the people who strengthen the country's economy, institutions and society.

The Danish Schools vision represents the hope that poverty need not determine a child's destiny. A child from a low-income household should be able to aspire to greatness. A girl from a disadvantaged community should be able to dream of becoming a doctor. An orphan should be able to build a secure future for himself and his family. No child should grow up believing that the circumstances of their birth are more powerful than their abilities.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's commitment to the initiative, and his emotional response to the children's stories, have brought renewed attention to the wider question of Pakistan's responsibility towards its younger generation. Yet the vision can achieve its full potential only when compassion is accompanied by planning, announcements by adequate resources, and hope by tangible results.

The future of a nation is closely connected to the dreams its children carry in their eyes. If those dreams are supported by education, opportunity and confidence, today's disadvantaged students can become tomorrow's architects of national progress. When a child is forced to abandon those dreams solely because of poverty, the loss is not merely personal or familial; it is a loss for the entire country.

The fundamental message of Danish Schools is therefore clear: if Pakistan wishes to secure its future, it must provide its children with the opportunity to build one of their own. The hope associated with the Prime Minister's tears is that this moment of compassion will translate into lasting commitment, ensuring that a child is ultimately recognised not for the deprivation they have endured, but for the potential they possess.

Real progress cannot be measured solely through impressive buildings, ambitious projects or economic indicators. It is also measured when a child from a poor household can stand tall, confident that their dreams matter, their hard work has value and their country offers them a genuine chance to succeed.

That is the promise of Danish Schools—and the hope of a brighter Pakistan.

THE DESTINATION
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Who Shall Hold The Reins Of The Future?

Let us suppose that, one morning, the world awakens to the announcement that artificial intelligence has successfully passed every examination by which mankind has hitherto presumed to measure the reach of its own intellect. It can traverse billions of pages of accumulated knowledge, examine millions of decisions, anticipate economic tendencies, map the prospective spread of disease, and formulate, within moments, policy recommendations for which even the most accomplished experts might otherwise require months of deliberation. The world stands astonished; investors are exhilarated; and the technological establishment busies itself with drawing fresh cartographies of the future.

Yet, at the very moment when this triumph appears to settle the question of intellectual supremacy, another question arises, unsettling in its simplicity and profound in its implications: if the machine has learnt to think more swiftly than man, has man, in turn, learnt to exercise sounder judgement?

This is, in truth, a question less about artificial intelligence than about humanity, the State, and the institutions through which collective life is governed.

We are assaying the intelligence of machines, yet neglecting the discernment of institutions. We are measuring the velocity of algorithms, whilst overlooking the wisdom by which their conclusions ought to be judged and their recommendations translated into action. A system may possess the capacity to anticipate the incidence of poverty with remarkable precision; but of what consequence is such prescience if the government lacks either the political resolve or the institutional capacity to eradicate its underlying causes? Artificial intelligence may identify the likelihood of tax evasion, trace suspicious patterns, and reveal the points at which public revenue is imperilled. Yet, if the State remains incapable of proceeding against influential interests, the most sophisticated algorithm will be rendered impotent at the very threshold of practical consequence.

It is here that the concept of institutional intelligence assumes its proper significance.

Institutional intelligence is neither synonymous with technological modernity nor reducible to the possession of immense datasets and formidable computing power. It denotes the capacity of an institution to comprehend information, convert comprehension into considered policy, translate policy into effective action, and evaluate the consequences of that action with honesty and intellectual discipline. It is, in essence, the faculty by which knowledge becomes judgement, judgement becomes public purpose, and public purpose acquires practical efficacy.

Where this faculty is deficient, even the most advanced artificial intelligence may become little more than a formidable instrument entrusted to an institution incapable of determining where it ought to be employed, for what reason it should be employed, or towards which legitimate end its power should be directed. The possession of intelligence, whether artificial or institutional, is not in itself proof of wisdom; nor does the capacity to calculate necessarily confer the ability to judge.

Consider, then, a State equipped with the most advanced artificial intelligence, yet burdened by public departments that remain dependent upon labyrinthine paperwork merely to exchange information. Imagine a government in possession of the personal and administrative data of millions of citizens, but unable to transform that abundance of information into coherent, effective policies for the public good. Its technological apparatus may be thoroughly contemporary, whilst its habits of governance remain obstinately antiquated. The contradiction is not merely one of appearance; it is a fundamental failure to reconcile the instruments of modernity with the purposes of responsible government.

There is, moreover, a danger that cannot prudently be dismissed: powerful technologies may not strengthen weak institutions so much as magnify their existing deficiencies. An opaque administrative order, armed with artificial intelligence, may acquire unprecedented means of collecting, correlating, and scrutinising the personal information of millions of citizens, without thereby becoming any more transparent or accountable to them. Its capacity for surveillance may increase exponentially, whilst the restraints upon its exercise of power remain lamentably unchanged.

The distinction is of the utmost importance. Technology does not, by its mere existence, constitute progress. It becomes an instrument of genuine advancement only when governed by ethical discernment, subject to effective legal oversight, sustained by transparency, and directed towards purposes consistent with human dignity and the public interest. Without these safeguards, technological sophistication may coexist with administrative injustice, and computational efficiency may serve ends fundamentally at odds with the welfare of those whom institutions are established to serve.

It follows that the future standing of successful States may depend less upon the magnitude of their artificial-intelligence models, the speed of their processors, or the sheer extent of their data reserves than upon the degree to which they have brought their collective intelligence into harmony with the accelerating capabilities of their technological instruments. The decisive advantage may belong not to the State possessing the most powerful machines, but to the one capable of employing them with the greatest institutional competence, constitutional restraint, and moral discernment.

Governments that deploy artificial intelligence principally to extend surveillance and concentrate authority may acquire the outward appearance of modernity whilst becoming, in their underlying relationship with the citizen, increasingly impersonal and inhumane. By contrast, States that direct its capabilities towards education, healthcare, the administration of justice, institutional transparency, economic opportunity, and the improvement of civic life may transform technological innovation into a genuine instrument of collective welfare.

The distinction, therefore, is not between those who embrace technology and those who reject it. It is between those who mistake technological power for the fulfilment of public purpose and those who understand that the value of an instrument must ultimately be judged by the ends it serves. A government may possess extraordinary computational resources and yet remain deficient in justice; it may accumulate unprecedented quantities of information and yet fail to understand the people whose lives that information represents. The challenge is not merely to acquire greater power, but to cultivate the wisdom necessary to exercise it responsibly.

Thus, the central question of the twenty-first century is not simply how far artificial intelligence may advance beyond the intellectual capacities of human beings. The more consequential question is whether humanity itself will become more judicious in its use of the intelligence it has created.

Artificial intelligence may accelerate the acquisition and analysis of information, illuminate possibilities that would otherwise remain concealed, and place before decision-makers an extraordinary range of prospective courses of action. It may disclose patterns, estimate consequences, and assist in resolving questions of immense complexity. Yet the determination of which course best serves human welfare, justice, and ethical principle remains a responsibility that cannot be discharged by computational speed alone. It rests upon human judgement, and upon the institutions through which that judgement is exercised, scrutinised, and held to account.

Perhaps, therefore, the authentic revolution of artificial intelligence will not arrive on the day when a machine surpasses the human mind in the performance of intellectual tasks. It will arrive when humanity learns to employ the intelligence of its own creation with wisdom, restraint, and a sufficiently clear conception of the common good.

Australian TV Reporter Swims Into Floodwater To Save Trapped Driver

WEB DESK

AUSTRALIA

An Australian TV reporter has described the scary moment he swam into rising floodwater to help save a man from a sinking car. The reporter, Will Murray, spoke about the rescue on Friday.

Murray works for the national broadcaster ABC. He was in Brisbane, in the state of Queensland, to report on the floods when he saw a car going under the water.

He did not wait. He swam toward the car with a local man named Daniel Haley.

The two men climbed on top of the vehicle. Then they opened the door and freed the driver, who was trapped inside.

Speaking on the ABC Breakfast TV show, Murray said the moment was frightening. "It was terrifying to watch what happened," he told the show.

He also spoke about how he felt after the rescue. He said a good sleep helped, and so did a drink or two the night before.

"Thankfully this morning, after a good sleep and maybe a couple of reds last night, I feel alright," he said.

His light words were a nice break from a very serious story. They also showed that he was safe and in good spirits.

Daniel Haley, the local man who helped him, also shared his thoughts. He said people in the area now have a new name for the reporter.

"Mad Dog Murray… he's got a new name around here," Haley said.

The nickname shows how much the locals respect what he did. For many people, the reporter became a hero in a single moment.

The story shows how fast floodwater can become dangerous. A car can start to sink in a short time, and the person inside may have very little time to get out.

It also shows the power of teamwork. Murray and Haley worked together, climbed onto the car, and got the door open. Their quick action helped a stranger in trouble.

Reporters often stand close to danger so they can show the public what is happening. This time, one of them became part of the story himself.

Floods are a serious risk in many parts of Queensland. They can rise quickly and catch people off guard. Roads and streets that look safe can turn dangerous in minutes.

Safety experts often tell people to stay out of floodwater whenever they can. Driving through flooded roads is risky, and cars can be swept away or stuck without warning. If you live in a flood area, it is wise to follow local warnings and plan a safe route.

The rescue also reminds us that kind acts can come from anyone. A reporter and a local man did not know the driver, but they chose to help anyway.

The driver was freed from the sinking car because two men acted quickly. Murray described the whole event as terrifying, yet he still felt fine after some rest.

As the floods in Brisbane continue to make news, this story stands out as a moment of courage. It shows that even in hard times, people will step up to help each other.

For now, Will Murray can enjoy his new nickname. Around Brisbane, he is known as "Mad Dog Murray."

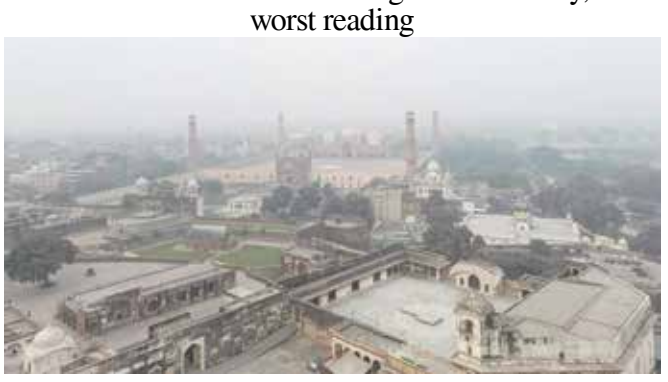
ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, meeting with Sandeep Mahajan, Regional Practice Director for the MENAAP region, World Bank, alongside Ms. Bolormaa Amgaabazar, Country Director, World Bank, and Simon Andrews, Division Director, IFC, to discuss Pakistan's economic reforms and priorities for investment-led growth.

Lahore most polluted city in world as AQI hits 344

- Doctors urge people to wear masks as hazardous smog covers the city, with Iqbal Town recording the worst reading

STAFF REPORTER

LAHORE



Lahore became the most polluted city in the world on Friday morning, as thick smog and dirty air covered large parts of the city. Doctors have advised people to wear masks when they go outside.

According to IQAir, a Swiss air quality website, Lahore sat at the top of its live ranking of major cities. The reading was taken at around 8am. The city's air quality index (AQI) stood at 344, which falls in the hazardous category.

The main pollutant was PM2.5. These are tiny particles that can harm the body. IQAir said the level in Lahore was 57 times higher than the yearly limit advised by the World Health Organisation.

PM2.5 particles are so small that they can enter the blood. Over time, they raise the risk of stroke, heart disease, lung cancer and serious breathing problems.

Across the border, India's capital Delhi took second place. Its AQI was 244, which is called very unhealthy.

Three other cities also appeared in the ranking. Dakar in Senegal recorded 184, while Mumbai and Kolkata in India recorded 179 and 172. All three were in the unhealthy range.

Air quality was not the same in every part of Lahore. Iqbal Town recorded the highest reading at 535. Airwash on Bedian Road followed with 497, and Kahna recorded 446.

Defence Phase 5 had a reading of 360, and Model Town recorded 350. The lowest among these areas was Barki Road at 253, which is still a high number.

Why does the air get worse in winter? Cooler air stays close to the ground and traps dirty particles. This creates a harmful mix of smoke from burnt crop waste, car fumes, factory smoke and construction dust.

Delhi also faces this problem every year. Officials there often blame farmers who burn crop leftovers in nearby Punjab and Haryana.

Children are at higher risk. Unicef warns that polluted air can cause serious chest infections in young ones, so parents should take extra care.

A 2023 study found that air pollution can cut life expectancy by more than five years in some parts of South Asia. This shows that the problem is not only about a few bad days.

Smog also disturbs daily life. Schools often close, roads become unsafe, and travel slows down. Hospitals see more patients with breathing trouble, which puts pressure on health services.

Doctors suggest some simple steps. Wear a mask outdoors, keep windows closed when the air is bad, and avoid long walks or exercise outside. People with asthma, heart problems and the elderly should be extra careful.

Trump Must Testify Under Oath In $10 Billion BBC Lawsuit

- A judge warns the case could be dropped if the president keeps delaying his sworn questioning

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

WASHINGTON

A federal judge has ordered President Donald Trump to answer questions under oath in his $10 billion BBC lawsuit. The order came on Thursday and sets a firm deadline of December 11.

US Magistrate Judge Enjoliqué Lett made the ruling after the BBC complained about repeated delays. The judge also warned that ignoring the order could bring penalties.

Those penalties may include sanctions. In the worst case, the court could dismiss the whole case.

This has surprised many people. After all, Trump started the lawsuit himself. Yet the rules say a person who sues must also face questions from the other side.

The sworn questioning is called a deposition. Lawyers ask questions, and the witness answers under oath. It usually happens outside the courtroom, but the answers can be used later in the case.

Trump was first set to give his deposition on October 16. He cancelled and said he had matters of national importance to handle.

The BBC's lawyers did not accept that reason. They told the court the president attended political campaign events in Georgia on the same day.

The broadcaster also said Trump's team wanted to push the questioning to January 2027. That would be a problem because the evidence-gathering phase is set to end on December 18.

The dispute began with a BBC documentary. It joined separate parts of Trump's speech from January 6, 2021, the day his supporters stormed the US Capitol.

The edit made it seem that Trump had directly urged his followers to use violence. The BBC later apologised for this, and two senior executives resigned.

However, the BBC says the program did not legally defame Trump. It plans to fight the claims in court.

Trump filed the lawsuit in December 2025. He asked for $5 billion for defamation and another $5 billion for alleged unfair trade practices. Together, that makes the $10 billion BBC claim.

The BBC is also looking for testimony from Jack Smith. He is the former special counsel who investigated Trump's actions around the Capitol attack.

Trump's lawyers oppose that request. They argue Smith has no first-hand knowledge that matters to this dispute.

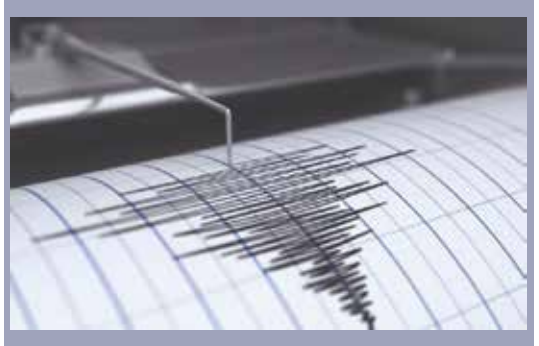
The judge also made another ruling in the BBC's favor. The broadcaster may now get Mar-a-Lago membership records.

The BBC wants these records to test Trump's claim that the documentary hurt his reputation. If his membership stayed strong, that could weaken his argument. For now, all eyes are on December 11. If Trump appears, the case moves forward. If he does not, he risks losing his own lawsuit.

The matter also raises a bigger question. A sitting president rarely sits for sworn questioning, so this order is unusual and will be watched closely.

Neither side has said what happens next. Further court filings are expected in the coming weeks.

Nagqu Quake Casualties: Strong Earthquake Kills 16 In China's Tibet



NEW DESK

NAGQU

Nagqu quake casualties have reached at least 16 deaths and 32 injuries after a magnitude 7 earthquake shook Tibet on Thursday night. China's state news agency Xinhua shared the figures, citing the emergency management bureau of Nagqu City.

As of 2:25 am on Friday, 11 of the injured people were in serious condition. The other 21 had minor injuries. Doctors and local teams are still caring for the wounded.

Local authorities found at least two injured people in a village near the epicentre. State broadcasters also reported that some houses in the villages closest to the centre of the quake showed cracks.

This was the strongest earthquake to hit China since January 2024. That makes it a major event for the country and a serious test for emergency teams.

The quake struck a sparsely populated county in Nagqu, in northern Tibet. It was shallow, at a depth of about 10 km (6.2 miles). Shallow quakes often cause stronger shaking at the surface.

The area is also very high. Data from the China Earthquake Networks Centre, known as CENC, shows the average height within 5 km of the epicentre is about 4,864 metres (15,960 feet). Reaching such places can be hard for rescue workers.

The epicentre was about 400 km from Lhasa, the Tibetan capital. The CENC said the quake was clearly felt in the local area.

Videos shared by local state-run media showed people running out of their homes. Many stayed outside, and some sat in cars parked on the street for safety.

One resident said the strong shaking woke them up. The person also heard the house creaking during the tremor.

Fire and rescue teams have been sent to the affected region, state media said. They are heading to the villages near the epicentre to search for people and help the injured.

Smaller tremors followed the main earthquake. CENC data recorded a series of quakes of around magnitude 3 and 4 in the surrounding areas. These aftershocks are common after a big quake, but they can still worry families.

China has faced deadly quakes in the region before. In 2010, a magnitude 7.1 earthquake hit Yushu in the neighbouring Qinghai province. It killed at least 2,698 people and left nearly 300 missing.

The latest Nagqu quake casualties are far lower than that. Still, officials have not said the count is final, so the numbers could change as teams reach more villages.

For now, the focus is on finding anyone in need and treating the injured. People in the area are advised to follow official updates and stay away from damaged buildings.

$8b huamniatarian aid o Taliban-ruled Afghanistan under scrutiny

- Kabul Institute report flags $1.42 billion in payments marked "confidential"

WEB DESK

KABUL

A Kabul Institute report has raised concerns over the transparency of international humanitarian aid to Taliban-ruled Afghanistan, stating that public records lack details on the use and transfer of 91% of the assistance.

International organisations received $8 billion in humanitarian aid for Afghanistan over the past five years, with the United States, United Kingdom and Germany among the leading donors, according to the report.

Only $21.9 million in transfers from international organisations to other recipient organisations could be traced, the report said. It also identified 316 payments worth $1.42 billion in which recipients were listed as "confidential".

International development institutions committed $12 billion to 1,208 projects in Afghanistan, separate from billions of dollars in grants reportedly provided directly to the Taliban administration, according to the report and experts.

Despite substantial international assistance, Afghans continue to face widespread poverty, while many seek opportunities abroad, including through irregular migration, experts say.

Pakistan, Canada medical colleges sign MoU for cooperation in education, training

NEWS DESK

OTTAWA

The High Commission of Pakistan in Ottawa on Friday hosted a ceremony to welcome visiting delegations from the College of Physicians and Surgeons Pakistan (CPSP) and the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada (RCPSC).

During the visit, CPSP and RCPSC signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) aimed at strengthening institutional cooperation in post-graduate medical education, training, faculty capacity building, and the exchange of best practices in areas of mutual interest.

Komal shocks fans with major announcement about her acting future

SHOWBIZ DESK

KARACHI

Pakistani actress and entrepreneur Komal Aziz Khan has officially announced her permanent departure from the entertainment industry, revealing that she stepped away from acting five years ago.

In a heartfelt statement shared on Instagram, she reflected on her journey since her last drama, Mohlat, and explained why she had waited until now to make the announcement public.

Komal shared a carousel of pictures with a caption thanking her followers for their continued affection. "Aap sab kay pyaar ka bohat shukriya, jis ki shayad main haqdar bhi nahi thi," she wrote, expressing gratitude for the love and support she has received over the years.

In her official statement, Komal revealed that she filmed her last drama, Mohlat, in 2021 and had hoped she would not have to return to showbiz. She explained that her departure had already happened five years ago, but she chose not to announce it publicly at the time.

Komal said she wanted to avoid the attention that such news could bring. She also needed time to see whether she could build a successful business and remain away from an industry that had once played a major role in her life. She said she now felt ready to share the decision and give her fans closure.

Looking back on the past five years, Komal described them as a personal journey of healing and self-love. She said stepping away from the limelight gave her time to look inward and seek the peace she had been looking for. Her statement reflected how her priorities had changed since leaving acting.

The actress also addressed her personal life, revealing that she had not yet entered the chapter of marriage. She said she trusted Allah's plan for her future and asked her followers to pray for her good fortune and blessings in her business.

Komal thanked the people who had supported her throughout her acting career, saying their love would always hold a special place in her heart. Although she has stepped away from the screen, she made it clear that she would not forget the fans who stood by her.

Ending her message on a grateful note, Komal promised to return the love she had received tenfold. She expressed her appreciation for her followers and sent them her love as she moves forward with her business ambitions.

Kareena Kapoor, Shahid Kapoor reunite on red carpet ahead of IIFA 2027

● IIFA Returns To Abu Dhabi With Star-Studded Bollywood Performances And Appearances

SHOWBIZ DESK

MUMBAI

Kareena Kapoor Khan and Shahid Kapoor reunited at the IIFA 2027 press conference; both shared warm hugs as they met on the red carpet.

On October 22, Kareena Kapoor and Shahid Kapoor reunited at the. press conference held in Mumbai. The former co-stars and ex-partners had a warm interaction and exchanged memorable moments at the star-studded event.

Their friendly exchange quickly became a subject of discussion, reminiscent of a similar meeting during last year's IIFA press conference. Kareena and Shahid, who dated in the 2000s, appeared together in several films, including Fida, Chup Chup Ke, and Jab We Met. Despite their successful on-screen chemistry, they parted ways before filming Jab We Met.

Since then, Kareena Kapoor Khan has married Saif Ali Khan and has two sons, while Shahid Kapoor has married Mira Rajput and they have a son and a daughter. At the event, Kareena wore an all-black ensemble accessorised with stylish sunglasses, while Shahid appeared in a classic white suit.

Other celebrities present included Salman Khan, Varun Dhawan, Rashmika Mandanna, Abhishek Banerjee, Ali Fazal and Pankaj Tripathi.

The IIFA Awards ceremony will be hosted by Varun Dhawan and Ananya Panday, with appearances by Karan Johar and Manish Paul. Bollywood stars Salman Khan, Kareena Kapoor Khan and Janhvi Kapoor are scheduled to perform.

Hira Mani's bold dance video sets tongues wagging, stirs controversy

SHOWBIZ REPORTER

KARACHI

Pakistani actress Hira Mani has drawn criticism from some social media users after sharing a dance video in a bold outfit alongside a confident message about her Pisces personality.

Hira shared the video on Instagram, showing off her dance moves while wearing an outfit that attracted mixed reactions.

Alongside the clip, she posted a message about how she treats people who show her kindness and how she responds when someone crosses her boundaries.

Her caption read, "I am a Pisces. If you are good to me, I'll show you how my parents raised me. But if you mess with me, I'll show you how I raised myself."

The message highlights the difference between the values a person learns from their parents and the strength they develop through their own experiences.

Hira's words suggest that while she values good manners and respect, she is also prepared to stand up for herself when treated badly.

The comment section brought another dimension to the post. One follower wrote, "Toooobah ka door open hae," a teasing remark that appeared to criticize the video. Hira replied with a string of laughter followed by "ok," seemingly choosing to respond playfully rather than argue with the commenter.

Jenna Ortega hints at career break after 'Wednesday' season 3

WEB DESK

ENGLAND

Jenna Ortega has hinted at taking a break from television once Netflix's hit series Wednesday comes to an end.

The 24-year-old actress, who rose to global fame for her portrayal of Wednesday Addams, shared her future career plans during an appearance on Josh Horowitz's Happy Sad Confused podcast, released on Thursday.

"I actually haven't had a lot of franchise conversations. I haven't," Ortega said, before adding, "But what I'm meant to do will come and find me."

She continued, "I think after 'Wednesday,' I'll probably be off the TV for a while."

Reflecting on her long career in television, Ortega explained that she has spent much of her life moving between different projects and now wants to give herself time to explore something new.

"I was bouncing from show to show as a kid, this to this, and I want to leave time for new things," the actress said.

Ortega began acting in the early 2010s and has appeared in numerous television productions, including Jane the Virgin, Stuck in the Middle and You.

'Wednesday' season 3 set to return in 2027

Ortega is expected to reprise her role as the darkly humorous Wednesday Addams in the upcoming third season of Netflix's Wednesday, which is scheduled to arrive in 2027.

The series also features returning cast members Luis Guzmán as Gomez Addams, Catherine Zeta-Jones as Morticia Addams and Isaac Ordonez as Pugsley Addams.

Netflix announced in February that production on the third season had begun, while also revealing that Winona Ryder, Ortega's co-star in Beetlejuice Beetlejuice, would join the cast alongside Eva Green.

Mehwish Hayat calls Zahid Ahmed 'Handsome Monster', catching fans' eyes

SHOWBIZ DESK

KARACHI

Pakistani actress Mehwish Hayat has caught fans' attention after calling her Rutba co-star Zahid Ahmed "the most handsome monster."

Mehwish shared the edit from the fan page mehwishhayatsource and tagged Zahid's official Instagram account. Her caption, "The most handsome monster!," offered a humorous compliment to the actor, combining admiration for his looks with a reference to his character's menacing screen presence. In Rutba, Zahid Ahmed plays Meer, whose intense appearance and commanding presence add to the drama's atmosphere. His thick moustache, styled hair and dark outfit contribute to the character's distinctive look, making Mehwish's choice of words a playful reference to his on-screen persona.

Adnan Siddiqui shares playful birthday post on social media

SHOWBIZ REPORTER

KARACHI

Adnan Siddique shared an image of himself and wished himself a happy birthday in a fun post.

Taking it to his Instagram handle, the Tamasha Season 5 host posted an image of himself wearing a silver crown.

He also added a caption to his post and noted, "There is no count of age today Only the count of happiness should be: more cake, fewer thoughts, and countless prayers".

The comment section flooded with blessings for Badshah Salamat, including his close friends and colleagues. Aijaz Aslam teased the host and noted in the comments, "Happy birthday, salamat rahain Badshah salamat". Shazia Wajahat also chipped in, "Happy birthday brother ... Geo hazarou saal". One also commented, "Happy birthday @ adnansid1, but Badsha salamt where is Laila g".

Earlier, Adnan Siddiqui bid farewell to Tamasha Season 5 following its grand finale, sharing a heartfelt message to thank the people behind the reality show while hinting at bigger plans for its next instalment.

Known to fans as "Badshah Salamat," the actor and television host took to Instagram to share a carousel of pictures from the final night on set.

The photos captured the grand finale stage, contestants, and members of the production team celebrating the successful conclusion of the season.

Driving without number plate: tiktoker Samea Mubarak taken into custody in Lahore

SHOWBIZ DESK

LAHORE

Lahore's Defence B police have registered a case against TikToker Samea Mubarak for driving a car without a number plate and injuring a police constable while attempting to flee a checkpoint.

According to police, Samea was driving an Audi without a number plate when officers stopped her at a checkpoint. She allegedly attempted to escape, and her vehicle struck and injured a constable during the incident.

Police said they pursued the vehicle and subsequently took Samea Mubarak and her female friend into custody.

Samea Mubarak is reportedly the sister of TikToker Nadeem Nani Wala.

Further legal proceedings are underway.

Urfi Javed recalls 10-minute conversation with Sheheryar Munawar in Dubai

WEB DESK

DUBAI

Urfi Javed is gushing over Pakistani actor Sheheryar Munawar as she recalled a warm encounter with him in Dubai that left a lasting impression on her.

The Indian television personality shared the anecdote while expressing her admiration for Munawar's performance in the ongoing drama Dar-e-Nijaat. Taking to social media, she shared a fan edit from the drama's latest episode and wrote, "Abu Bakar! The man you are," referring to his character.

Urfi Javed later posted a reel of herself, revealing that she had met Munawar several years ago when both were in Dubai to attend the Filmfare Awards Middle East.

Recalling the encounter, Urfi said she was not particularly popular at the time and had approached the actor for a photograph.

"Who isn't watching Dar-e-Nijaat?? Fun fact I met Shehryar long back in Dubai when I wasn't popular, asked him for a picture, we both were staying at the same hotel for Filmfare Middle East. He spoke to me for like good 10-15 mins, extremely sweet and courteous. Your little act of kindness leaves a lasting impression on people," she wrote in the caption.

'Dar-e-Nijaat' draws attention across the border

Urfi's praise adds to the growing attention surrounding Dar-e-Nijaat, which has also attracted interest from audiences beyond Pakistan.

Munawar's portrayal of Abu Bakar has captured audiences' attention not only in Pakistan but also across Bangladesh, Nepal and, particularly, India.

Urfi is not the first Indian personality to express admiration for a Pakistani drama. Actress and television personality Shehnaaz Gill previously expressed her love for the Pakistani drama Meri Zindagi Hai Tu, starring Bilal Abbas and Hania Aamir.

About Dar-e-Nijaat

Produced by Three's Entertainment, Dar-e-Nijaat features star-studded cast including Sheheryar Munawar, Dur e Fishan Saleem, Sahar Hashmi, Romaisa Khan, Sania Saeed and Saba Hameed in key roles.

Jennifer Lopez set to headline Abu Dhabi F1 concert

WEB DESK

NEW YORK

As part of the after-race entertainment lineup for the F1 season finale, J.Lo is bringing her classics to the UAE. You read correctly: on December 4, Jennifer Lopez will perform at Etihad Live on Yas Island.

She is also not at all new to performing in the United Arab Emirates.

Few actors have the same command of a stage as Lopez. Let's Get Loud, On the Floor, Dance Again, Waiting for Tonight, Jenny from the Block, and If You Had My Love are just a few of the hits that helped make her a household name. They will feature her renowned showmanship, wardrobe changes, and choreography.

Fans from the UAE have previously seen her here. Last year, Lopez gave a performance at Saadiyat Nites in the capital. Later that year, she gave a performance at Etihad Arena in July. Now, a December night at an outdoor location under the stars promises a whole different vibe.

A four-night run of after-race concerts at Etihad Live coincides with J. Lo's Friday night performance.

On Thursday, December 3, Lewis Capaldi and Zara Larsson will kick off the weekend's entertainment, setting the tone for the next three days. On Friday, December 4, Alex Warren and Jennifer Lopez will take over, and on Saturday, December 5, Imagine Dragons will be the main act. On Sunday, December 6, the Chainsmokers and The Script round out race week.

The Yas Marina circuit will host the 2026 Abu Dhabi Grand Prix from December 3-6. The Formula 1 season is coming to an end. Fans can experience everything from the sound of the engines to J.Lo's opening act in a single night thanks to Friday's on-track schedule, which leads directly into the evening's performance.

Trump slams NBA's LeBron James for national anthem actions

SPORTS DESK

NEW YORK

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 before their season opener against the New York Knicks on Tuesday.

"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.

Trump, speaking at a campaign rally in Iowa on Thursday night, renewed the attack, calling James's actions "a big scandal kind of a story."

Trump and James have traded barbs before, and the NBA's all-time leading scorer shrugged off the president's latest criticism.

"It must be a slow news day at the office," he said after the Sixers completed an epic comeback to beat the Cleveland Cavaliers 114-106 in Philadelphia. "Slow news day at the office."

James, 41, is entering a record-extending 24th NBA season with his fourth team.

Sixers coach Nick Nurse said Trump's comments were the kind of distractions he was schooling his team to tune out.

SIKANDAR Raza fought alone with 68, Afghanistan vs Zimbabwe, Tri-series final, Sharjah.

PSL 12 Direct Signing Window Opens Ahead Of Big Season

● The PCB has shared the full pre-season plan for the 2027 league, including key dates, a player auction and more venues than ever before

SPORTS REPORTER

LAHORE

The PSL 12 direct signing window opened on Friday, giving all eight franchises a chance to start building their squads early. The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) also shared a clear pre-season plan for the next edition of the league.

Under the new plan, every franchise can sign one marquee player directly. The player must not have played in PSL 10 or PSL 11.

The window opened on October 23 and will stay open until November 23, 2026. Teams now have one month to make their picks.

The twelfth edition of the Pakistan Super League will start on March 18, 2027. The final will be played on May 2.

The tournament will run for 46 days and include 44 matches. Of these, 40 are league games and four are playoff matches.

The PCB also confirmed that the player auction will take place on January 23,

2027. Franchises will use it to fill the rest of their squads after the direct signings.

This season will also look different for fans. For the first time, the league will be played at five to six venues. More cities will get a chance to host top T20 cricket.

The board has also linked the domestic calendar with the PSL pre-season. The National T20 Gold and National T20 Silver tournaments will be the main talent-spotting events before the auction.

This gives local players a clear path to the league. Strong performers in these events may attract franchise attention and even get a look from the national team.

A franchise workshop is planned for next week. Teams and the board will use it to settle several important points.

These include the player-retention deadline, the trade window before the auction, the auction rules and the playing conditions. Franchises are waiting for these details before they plan their next moves.

PCB Chairman Mohsin Naqvi said the 12th edition would be the league's most ambitious yet. He added that the league is gaining momentum by going to more cities than ever before.

He also said the roadmap will give franchises, players, sponsors and broadcasters more certainty. Everyone can now plan their work with a clear timeline.

PSL Chief Executive Officer Salman Naseer spoke about the new venue plan. He said the league will go to five to six venues for the first time, bringing it closer to fans across the country.

He added that decisions on direct signings, trades and retentions in the coming weeks will shape the squads for the March start.

The PCB says more announcements about pre-season arrangements will follow in the coming weeks. Fans should watch for news on venues, retention rules and the trade window.

Until then, all eyes are on the marquee signings. Each franchise will want a big name before the window closes on November 23.

PSL 12 will expand to six more venues for first time: Naqvi

SPORTS REPORTER

LAHORE

The HBL Pakistan Super League on Friday confirmed the pre-season roadmap for its 12th edition and the journey begins today, with Direct Signings now open across all eight franchises.

According to a PCB statement released in Lahore, the player-movement calendar, from Direct Signings to the Player Auction on 23 January 2027, has been locked in. HBL PSL 12 will run from 18 March to 2 May 2027, featuring 44 matches across 46 days, played across five to six venues.

The window opens today and runs until 23 November 2026. Each franchise may directly sign one marquee player who did not feature in HBL PSL 10 or HBL PSL 11.

In a significant step towards strengthening Pakistan's cricketing pipeline, the PCB has formally aligned its domestic competition calendar with the HBL PSL pre-season cycle.

The National T20 Gold and National T20 Silver tournaments will serve as the primary talent-identification and player-pathway events ahead of the HBL PSL 12 Player Auction - offering outstanding domestic performers a clear and direct route from national circuit cricket into the country's premier T20 franchise league, and onward to national team consideration.

A Franchise workshop will be scheduled next week to finalise the deadline for Player Retentions, Pre-Auction Trade Window, Player Auction Rules and Playing Conditions.

PCB Chairman Mohsin Naqvi:

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

ICC announces dates for LA28 Olympic qualifiers

WEB DESK

DUBAI

The International Cricket Council (ICC) has confirmed that the men's and women's qualifying tournaments for the Los Angeles 2028 Olympics will take place in January and February 2028, while introducing changes to the qualification criteria for the United States women's team.

The qualifying events were originally scheduled for 2027 but have now been pushed back to early 2028, less than six months before cricket makes its long-awaited return to the Olympic Games.

Cricket will feature at the Los Angeles Olympics for the first time in 128 years, having last appeared at the Games in Paris in 1900.

According to the ICC's qualification framework, several teams will secure direct entry into the Olympic cricket competitions based on their performances in international tournaments and the ICC T20I rankings.

In the women's competition, Australia, India, South Africa and Great Britain have already qualified as the highest-ranked eligible teams from their respective continents, based on performances at the Women's T20 World Cup earlier this year.

Meanwhile, the men's qualification process will be determined by the ICC T20I rankings as of December 31, 2026.

The highest-ranked eligible teams from Africa, Asia, Europe and Oceania will secure automatic qualification for the men's Olympic tournament.

As the host nation, the United States are also eligible for direct entry into both the men's and women's competitions, subject to meeting the ICC's ranking requirements.

Under the regulations announced in June, the USA men's and women's teams must have featured among the top 15 in their respective ICC T20I rankings at some point between June 30 and December 31, 2026.

Sadaf, Iram shine in must-win match to put Stars in final of National Women's T20 Tournament

SPORTS REPORTER

FAISALABAD

The league-stage of the National Women's T20 Tournament concluded with Stars qualifying for the final after a tense last-over chase against tournament favorites Invincibles, while the other finalists Strikers outclassed Conquerors in a one-sided affair as action unfolded on Friday across two venues in Faisalabad.

Sadaf Shamas' unbeaten half-century and Iram Javed's 47 took Stars over the line with four balls to spare over Invincibles, who had put 140-6 on the board with the help of Eyman Fatima's 63-ball 85.

With the loss, Invincibles slipped to third position due to their net run rate being

behind Stars as both teams had accumulated eight points each.

Conquerors also had an outside chance of qualifying but they needed a net run-rate boosting win over the unbeaten Strikers but it was not to be. Strikers defended their total of 123-6 by restricting Conquerors to 63 in 14.1 overs.

At the Bohranwali Ground, Stars lost the coin toss to Invincibles but got off to a dream start as they removed Samiya Afsar and skipper Gull Feroza with just one run on the board. From this juncture, Eyman took it upon herself to lead the fightback as she struck 12 fours and three sixes in her 63-ball 85.

Eyman shared a brilliant 115-run third-wicket stand with Syeda Aroob Shah (29, 32b, 3x4s). Invincibles also benefitted from Sidra Amin's unbeaten 10-ball 12 and Shahar Bano's eight-ball 11. Diana Baig's four overs yielded two for 17, while skipper Tuba only gave away 21 runs for her two wickets.

In reply, Sadaf Shamas anchored the chase with a 59 not out off 52 balls including six fours and two sixes. She lost her opening partner Samina Aftab for 19 off 15 before Yusra Amir also departed.

Haider Ali says govt has yet to give him recognition he deserves

Targets world title and Paralympic glory after Asian silver

SPORTS DESK

LAHORE

Pakistan's decorated para-athlete Haider Ali has appealed to the federal and Punjab governments to provide greater recognition and support to para-sports, saying that despite winning major international medals for the country, he has yet to receive the appreciation and backing he believes his achievements merit.

"I have always faced injustice in this regard. I have not received the love and government support that I should have been given," Haider Ali said in a message following his

silver-medal performance in the discus throw at the 2026 Asian Para Games in Nagoya, Japan.

The four-time Paralympic medallist urged authorities to recognise his accomplishments on a par with those of other celebrated Pakistani athletes, stressing that sustained institutional support was essential to help him continue competing at the highest level.

"Everyone can see the attention being given to sports in Punjab. I want the chief minister to extend similar attention to the National Paralympic Committee and para-athletes," he said, also appealing to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to ensure greater support for athletes with disabilities.

Ali pointed to his record of international success, including a gold medal at the Tokyo 2020 Paralympics, a bronze at Paris 2024 and gold at the previous Asian Para Games. He noted that his earlier Asian Para Games gold was Pakistan's only gold medal at that edition, yet he felt his achievements had not received adequate recognition.

Despite his disappointment, Ali acknowledged the Pakistan Sports Board's cooperation and expressed gratitude to Pakistan WAPDA, his federation and the National Paralympic Committee for their support.

Pakistan qualify for Sultan of Johor Cup final

SPORTS DESK

JOHOR BAHUR

Pakistan junior hockey team qualified for the final of the Sultan of Johor Cup after securing a draw against Japan.

The Green-shirts managed to settle with a 2-2 draw in their final round-robin match at the Taman Daya Hockey Stadium in Johor Bahru on Friday.

Pakistan came from behind thanks to goals from Hamza Fayyaz (34th minute) and Ghulam Mustafa (43rd) to book their place in the title clash.

Both teams finished the league stage with seven points and an identical goal difference of plus eight.

However, the Green Shirts advanced to the final on the basis of a superior goals-scored record, having netted 18 goals against Japan's 16.

The Green Shirts concluded the preliminary round with two wins, one draw and one defeat. Pakistan will face undefeated Malaysia in the final on Saturday at the same venue.

BERLIN: President Asif Ali Zardari inspects the Guard of Honour along with German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier during the Official Welcome Ceremony at Germany.

President Zardari receives guard of honour in Germany

NEW DESK

BERLIN

President Asif Ali Zardari was accorded a grand reception at Germany's Ministry of Defence, where he was also presented with a guard of honour during his official visit to the country.

German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier welcomed President Zardari on his arrival at the ministry. The ceremony featured a guard of honour for the Pakistani president, with the national anthems of both countries played on the occasion.

President Zardari is visiting Germany at the invitation of President Steinmeier. The visit is particularly significant as it marks the first time in 23 years that a Pakistani head of state has travelled to Germany.

The visit also coincides with the 75th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Pakistan and Germany, which the two countries are marking this year.

During his stay, President Zardari is scheduled to meet his German counterpart and senior government officials.

He is accompanied by a high-level delegation for discussions on bilateral ties, regional and international developments, and opportunities to expand economic and trade cooperation.

The visit is expected to give fresh impetus to relations between Pakistan and Germany and promote stronger cooperation across various sectors.

The visit assumes special significance as Pakistan and Germany are commemorating the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations this year. The invitation extended by the German president reflects the importance attached to continued high-level engagement between the two countries.

President Zardari's visit is expected to provide an opportunity to explore new avenues for enhancing bilateral cooperation and strengthening relations across various sectors, including trade, investment and economic development.

Kundi urges centre to release KP governor Rs160 billion promised by PM

- Faisal Karim Kundi says peace and security come first, promising better police equipment, a welfare package and zero tolerance for corruption

STAFF REPORTER

PESHAWAR

The KP governor Rs160 billion request was made on Friday, when Governor Faisal Karim Kundi asked the federal government to release the money without delay. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had already announced the amount to help keep law and order in the province.

Speaking at a press conference in Peshawar, Kundi said peace and security are the top goals of the provincial administration. He said development and prosperity can only follow once calm returns.

He was joined by Samar Haroon Bilour, the Adviser on Information and Public Relations.

Kundi promised that police and other law enforcement agencies would get the equipment they need to fight terrorism. He said the province faces a serious militant threat, and its forces must be ready.

He also spoke about police families. A welfare package will be announced for personnel whose salaries have not gone up for years.

The governor said the needs of the Frontier Constabulary are also being reviewed. The force was recently renamed the Federal Constabulary.

His comments came a day after the Prime Minister chaired a provincial apex committee meeting in Peshawar. Chief of Defence Forces Field Marshal Asim Munir and senior federal and provincial officials attended.

Kundi said the Centre has agreed to provide the money sought for the province's development. He added that more support will come if it is needed.

"The Centre has assured us that Rs160 billion will be released to them immediately," he said.

On governance, the governor said there will be zero tolerance for corruption. He also named irregularities in government contracts and politically influenced transfers and postings.

He promised action against any officials found guilty of wrongdoing in the handling of wheat at the Azakhel warehouse.

Kundi also called on all political parties to work together on security and development. He said the provincial government will present its demands to the Centre through dialogue and argument, not confrontation.

Samar Haroon Bilour said the fight against militancy cannot be won without stronger police and Counter-Terrorism Department capabilities. She described police personnel as heroes of the province.

According to her, they need modern weapons, tracking systems, vehicles and advanced defensive gear. She said the federal government has promised extra financial and other support wherever it is needed.

Bilour said the apex committee talked about both security and development. The provincial team put its demands before the federal government.

One idea was to open Daanish schools in underserved areas, especially Bajaur. The aim is to give children access to modern education and training.

The development plan also includes better connectivity, fixes for traffic and governance problems, and IT hubs and training centres for young people.

BISP removes over 2.25 million fake beneficiaries

STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD

The Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) has removed more than 2.25 million fake beneficiaries from its records and suspended payments to over 800,000 others, according to details presented in the National Assembly on Friday.

The Ministry of Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety Division informed the National Assembly during question hour that a total of 2,259,404 beneficiaries were removed from the programme between July 1, 2025, and June 30, 2026.

Payments to more than 800,000 additional beneficiaries were also suspended, according to the details submitted to the house.

An audit report also identified 140,488 government employees and their family members as beneficiaries of the BISP during 2019-20.

The report further revealed that more than Rs712 million had been recovered from fake and ineligible beneficiaries. Of this amount, over Rs545 million was recovered through the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA), while more than Rs21 million was recovered from BISP employees.

The ministry also reported receiving 55,579 complaints during the previous fiscal year concerning unauthorised deductions from funds, embezzlement and misappropriation. It said inquiries were underway and action was being taken under the relevant laws.

Separately, BISP has cautioned citizens against fraudulent messages circulating on social media and through mobile phone numbers, warning people not to fall victim to scams involving its financial assistance programmes.

The programme has clarified that all official messages are sent exclusively from the number 8171, while messages received from other numbers should be treated as fake.

According to BISP, fraudulent messages often claim that beneficiaries' stipends have been approved, request contact details to transfer money, or promise enrolment in the programme and the issuance of financial assistance.

Detection bills to be issued only through centralized portal: Leghari

STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD

Federal Minister for Energy (Power Division) Sardar Awais Ahmad Khan Leghari has taken strict notice of electricity distribution companies (DISCOs) imposing excessive and unjustified detection bills on consumers, warning DISCOs that no incorrect or arbitrary detection bill will be charged to any consumer in the future.

Addressing an important meeting with the Boards of Directors of DISCOs on Friday, the minister issued formal directives to implement a stringent and comprehensive reform framework, said a press release.

He underlined that while curbing electricity theft remains an unquestionable national priority, arbitrarily burdening innocent citizens will not be tolerated under any circumstances. Under this framework, the discretionary authority of field staff is being strictly regulated to protect consumers while ensuring that no hurdle is created for honest officers performing their duties against power theft.

In light of the Federal Minister's directives, the Power Division is mandating that all DISCOs issue detection bills exclusively through the centralized online portal developed by PITC. A complete ban has been enforced on the issuance of manual and discretionary detection bills by field staff or SDOs. Issuing manual bills will be officially treated as severe misconduct, liable to strict disciplinary proceedings and major penalties against the responsible officials and staff.

Under this framework, comprehensive proposed amendments to the Consumer Service Manual (CSM) will be submitted in the coming days to bind every process within clearly defined timelines.

Under the new framework, replacing defective or burnt meters immediately or within a maximum of two billing cycles has been made mandatory, while average billing during this period will be restricted strictly to a maximum of two months.

High court maintains suspension of Shireen Mazari's arrest warrants

STAFF REPORTER

LAHORE

The Multan bench of the Lahore High Court has maintained the suspension of arrest warrants issued against former federal minister Shireen Mazari in an anti-corruption case and adjourned the hearing until November 3.

Justice Tariq Saleem Sheikh heard the case concerning arrest warrants issued against Mazari by an anti-corruption court.

During the hearing, Mazari's counsel, Syed Muzammil Hassan Bukhari, said the Anti-Corruption Department had previously cleared his client of the allegations.

The lawyer said no land records (jamabandi) or official documents had been recovered from Mazari's possession.

He said the allegations of tampering with official records were baseless and that his client had been implicated in the case on the basis of a supplementary statement recorded from an official under Section 161 of the Code of Criminal Procedure.

Islamabad LG Polls Delay Likely Again Despite ECP Schedule

- Just a day after the ECP announced December 20 as polling day, the government has moved a bill that could push the capital's local elections back for the sixth time

Chaudhary Mudasser

LAHORE

The Islamabad LG polls delay may happen once again. The federal government has hinted that it wants to postpone local government elections in the capital. The hint came just one day after the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) fixed December 20 as the polling date. If the plan goes ahead, this will be the sixth delay in the process.

On Thursday, the government placed an important report in the National Assembly. The report was prepared by the Standing Committee on Interior. It deals with the Islamabad Capital Territory Local Government (Amendment) Bill, 2026, also known as Ordinance No. II of 2026.

PML-N lawmaker Anjum Aqeel Khan presented the report in the House. He stood in for committee chairman Raja Khurram Shahzad. The News first reported the development.

According to the draft of the bill, Islamabad will have three town corporations. Each one will have a mayor and two deputy mayors.

The bill also gives the federal government two jobs. First, it must officially notify the three town corporations. Second, it must redraw union councils on the basis of population.

This is the main reason the Islamabad LG polls delay looks likely. Fresh delimitation takes time, so voting on December 20 would not be possible under this plan.

Now that the report is in the House, the government is expected to pass the bill soon. The National Assembly session is still going on and will continue until October 27. That leaves only a few days for the bill to move forward.

This is not the first time the vote has been put off. The elections were earlier planned for February 15 this year. They were postponed after the ordinance was issued.

Meanwhile, the ECP has kept its own work going. On Wednesday, it told its office to complete all constitutional and legal steps needed to hold the polls. After that order, the commission released the election schedule.

Under this schedule, candidates can submit their nomination papers from November 2 to 6. The commission has also named 49 officers to work as district returning officers, returning officers and assistant returning officers.

There is another update on the election front. The ECP has fixed October 28 for a hearing on how local government elections are being held in Punjab. The same hearing will also cover cantonment boards across the country.

The two sides now seem to be moving in different directions. The ECP is preparing for a vote in December. The government is working on a new structure that needs more time.

DSP CTD Martyred With Three Policemen In Karak Terrorist Attack

- Two terrorists were killed in retaliatory fire during a search operation in Karak, while the governor strongly condemned the attack

STAFF REPORTER/ WEB DESK

KARAK

A DSP CTD martyred in Karak along with three other police personnel after terrorists opened fire on a police team. The attack happened during a search operation in the district. Police returned fire and killed two terrorists.

The martyred personnel were identified as DSP CTD Imran Ud Din Khan, Sub-Inspector Afzal Awan, Havaldar Kazim and Head Constable Amjad.

Police were busy with the search operation when the attackers suddenly opened fire. The team responded right away. In the exchange, two terrorists lost their lives.

The loss of a senior officer like DSP Imran Ud Din Khan is a heavy blow for the force. Alongside him, three other brave policemen gave their lives while on duty.

Here is a quick summary. Four policemen were martyred. Two terrorists were killed. The attack took place in Karak during a search operation. The governor condemned it and prayed for the martyrs.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Faisal Karim Kundi strongly condemned the attack. He said he was deeply saddened by the martyrdom of four police personnel, including DSP CTD Imran Ud Din.

The governor said the sacrifices of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa police in the fight against terrorism can never be forgotten.

He also said, "The blood of our martyrs will not go in vain." He added that the resolve against terrorism will grow stronger and the struggle for peace will continue.

Kundi prayed for the elevation of the ranks of the martyrs. He also prayed for patience for their grieving families.

A DSP leads a team and takes responsibility for the safety of others. When such an officer falls in the field, the entire force feels the pain. It also shows that senior officers stand on the front line with their men.

Sub-Inspector Afzal Awan, Havaldar Kazim and Head Constable Amjad served in the same spirit. Each of them wore the uniform with pride and paid the highest price for it.

Search operations are a routine and risky part of police work. Officers go into such missions knowing that danger can appear at any moment. Still, they do the job to protect people.

The families of the four martyrs are now facing a huge loss. Their grief is shared by colleagues and citizens who value the service of the police.

Police in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have faced many attacks while fighting terrorism. Each martyr leaves behind a story of courage and duty. The names of Imran Ud Din Khan, Afzal Awan, Kazim and Amjad will be remembered with respect.

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