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Pakistan Condemns Houthi Attack On Riyadh's KAFD Tower

STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD

Islamabad, Friday: Pakistan condemns Houthi militia for its attack on a tower at the King Abdullah Financial District (KAFD) in Riyadh. The Foreign Office made its position clear in an official statement.

Foreign Office Spokesperson Sajjad Haider Khan said the strike was a serious violation of the sovereignty of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. He called it an act of aggression that cannot be accepted.

The spokesperson raised concern about the repeated targeting of civilian buildings and economic sites. He said such attacks put innocent lives at risk.

He also warned that these actions are a real danger to peace and security in the wider region. In his words, the attacks must stop at once.

Pakistan also showed strong support for its close partner. Sajjad Haider Khan said Pakistan stands firmly with the government and people of Saudi Arabia in this difficult time.

He added that Pakistan backs the Kingdom's lawful right to defend its land and its borders. This includes the right to protect its own citizens and the residents living in the country.

The statement also spoke about Pakistan's larger goal. The spokesperson said the country has always worked for lasting peace and stability in the region, and it will keep doing so.

KAFD is one of the most important business centres in Riyadh.

Turkish vessel to conduct two-month oil, gas survey off Sindh, Makran coasts

● Oruc Reis arrival ushers in new era of Pak-Turkiye energy cooperation: DPM Dar

MUDASSER IQBAL

ISLAMABAD/KARACHI

Turkish research vessel Oruç Reis will conduct a two-month 3D seismic survey off the Sindh and Makran coasts to explore potential oil and gas reserves in Pakistan's maritime waters, Turkish Energy Minister Alparslan Bayraktar said on Friday.

Speaking at a dinner hosted in his honour by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Bayraktar said the scientific data obtained through the survey would help determine prospects for future oil and gas exploration and drilling.

According to a Prime Minister's Office statement, Shehbaz welcomed the arrival of the Turkish research vessel and thanked Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan for his support and cooperation in the offshore exploration project.

The prime minister said Pakistan's longstanding relations with Turkiye were rooted in friendship, mutual trust and shared interests.

He welcomed growing energy cooperation between the two countries and expressed his desire to expand collaboration by benefiting from Turkiye's technical expertise and experience.

Shehbaz said the exploration of potential oil and gas reserves within Pakistan's maritime boundaries represented an important step towards strengthening the country's energy security and economic development.

He also highlighted opportunities to expand bilateral cooperation beyond offshore exploration, particularly in minerals and renewable energy.

Bayraktar thanked the prime minister for the warm welcome and hospitality extended to him and his delegation.

He said the arrival of Oruç Reis marked the beginning of a new phase of energy cooperation between Pakistan and Turkiye.

The Turkish minister reaffirmed his country's commitment to sharing technical expertise, scientific knowledge and engineering capabilities with Pakistan.

The Turkish delegation included parliamentarian Ali Şahin, president of the Pakistan-Turkiye Friendship Group, Turkish Ambassador Irfan Neziroğlu and senior officials from the Turkish Ministry of Energy.

Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, federal ministers Junaid Anwar Chaudhry, Attaullah Tarar, Ali Pervaiz Malik and Sardar Awais Ahmed Khan Leghari also attended the dinner.

Adviser to the Prime Minister Muhammad Ali and special assistants Tariq Fatemi and Lt Gen (retd) Muhammad Zafar Iqbal were also present.

Meanwhile, Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar on Friday described the arrival of Turkish seismic research vessel Oruc Reis as a new chapter in Pakistan-Turkiye scientific and strategic cooperation, saying the two countries sought a long-term partnership in the energy sector.

Addressing a welcome ceremony at Karachi Port, he said Pakistan's coastline offered significant opportunities for offshore energy exploration, shipping and fisheries, but stressed the need for scientific research, skilled manpower and environmental protection.

DPM Dar said the vessel would combine Turkiye's scientific expertise with the capabilities of Pakistani energy companies to advance offshore exploration. The seismic data collected would help identify geological structures beneath the seabed and guide future exploration decisions.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif in a group photo with members of the Turkish delegation led by Minister of Energy and Natural Resources of Turkiye, Alparslan Bayraktat.

Islamabad Police's SWAT Force Gets 20 New Vehicles From Interior Minister

● Mohsin Naqvi hands over the symbolic key at an Islamabad ceremony to boost emergency response power

STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD



Islamabad police's SWAT Force has received 20 new vehicles to make its work faster and stronger. Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi handed over the vehicles on Friday morning in the federal capital.

The Interior Ministry said the new vehicles will improve the operational capabilities of the force. They will help the team reach any place quickly during an emergency.

A special ceremony was held by the Ministry of Interior to mark the occasion. Officials, senior police officers and SWAT team members attended the event.

During the ceremony, Mohsin Naqvi handed over a symbolic key to the Inspector General of Police, Islamabad. The key showed the official transfer of all 20 vehicles to the force.

After the handover, the minister looked closely at the new vehicles. He checked their condition and asked officers about their use in field duty.

He also met the SWAT jawans and spoke with them one by one. He praised their hard work and their readiness to serve the people of the capital.

Several terrorists killed in North Waziristan while trying to escape disguised as women

STAFF REPORTER

NORTH WAZIRISTAN



North Waziristan Several terrorists killed in North Waziristan on Friday, security sources said, after forces carried out an operation in the Mir Ali area.

The sources said the action was taken against the group officials call "Fitna al-Khawarij." They said it was part of the Azm-e-Istehkam vision, a government campaign to fight militancy.

According to the sources, a group of militants tried to run away from the area in a rickshaw. They were reportedly dressed as women to avoid being noticed.

Security forces stopped the rickshaw, and the militants were killed while trying to escape, the sources added.

Officials said this trick goes against moral values. They said it misuses the respect and safety that society gives to women.

The sources described the move as a "failed attempt" to save their lives. They also called the tactic low and shameful.

Security sources further claimed there was evidence that the militants were hiding in mosques and civilian areas. They said explosive material was being planted in such places.

The sources also said the group uses innocent women and children as human shields in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. They said this puts ordinary families at great risk.

Mir Ali is a town in North Waziristan, a district near the Afghan border. Security forces have carried out several operations in the area in recent times.

Tarar says public opinion should determine creation of new provinces

● Self-accountability, transparency hallmarks of PM Shehbaz's governance: Atta Tarar



STAFF REPORTER/WEB DESK

ISLAMABAD

Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar on Friday said the creation of new provinces should be determined by public opinion, adding that a referendum could be held to ascertain people's views on the issue.

Speaking to reporters outside the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), he said new provinces should be established if people supported the idea and the proposal should not be pursued if they opposed it. "There is no harm in holding a referendum," he said, adding that the Constitution had a clear provision for referendums on matters of national importance or public interest.

Atta Tarar said people should be given an opportunity to express their views before any decision was taken, adding that the situation could be assessed once public opinion had emerged. Responding to questions about an ECP hearing concerning his visit to Gujranwala, the minister said he had travelled to his hometown at the invitation of the general secretary of the District Bar Association. He said no election candidate had attended the event and the invitation had been received before the announcement of the election schedule. He added that the association's general secretary was also his colleague.

Atta Tarar also said Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had met the president, during which various matters were discussed and the need to move forward through mutual understanding and consensus was considered.

Meanwhile, Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar said on Friday that self-accountability and transparency have been the hallmarks of the governance led by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

Field Marshal Munir Vows To Eliminate Terrorism And Protect Peace In KP

● The army chief visits Miran Shah, hears a security briefing, and praises troops and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa police for their courage

STAFF REPORTER

PESHAWAR



Pakistan's top military leader has renewed his pledge to eliminate terrorism from the country. Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, who serves as Chief of Army Staff and Chief of Defence Forces, visited Miran Shah in North Waziristan on Friday.

The Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) shared the details in an official statement.

Upon arrival, the Corps Commander Peshawar received him. He then got a full briefing on the current security situation in the area.

Officers also explained the ongoing intelligence-based operations. They shared plans to protect the gains made through long counterterrorism efforts.

The Field Marshal learned about steps to bring lasting peace and stability to the region.

He then laid a floral wreath at Yadgar-e-Shuhada. This was his way of paying tribute to the army martyrs who gave their lives for the country.

During the visit, he spoke with officers and soldiers. He praised their strong preparation, professional skills and deep commitment to defending Pakistan.

He also had kind words for the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa police. He called them a brave front-line force and said he is proud of their sacrifices in the fight against terrorism and Fitna-al Khwarij.

The ISPR said the Field Marshal repeated the firm resolve of the security forces. Working closely with law enforcement agencies, they aim to end the threat of terrorism for good and protect the hard-earned peace of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Pakistan has faced a rise in terror attacks, mainly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, since the Afghan Taliban came to power in 2021.

The Centre for Research and Security Studies (CRSS) shared fresh numbers for the second quarter of 2026. These two provinces remained the main centres of violence.

Together, they made up nearly 96% of all violence-related deaths in that period.

Opposition's APC faces uncertainty as PTI, JUI-F decline participation

STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD



Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has declined to participate in the opposition's all-party conference (APC) scheduled for Saturday, rejecting its agenda and proposed demands.

The party has conveyed its reservations to its leadership, maintaining that the conference agenda does not align with PTI's manifesto and demands.

Earlier, Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) also declined to participate, citing differences over the meeting's agenda and proposed demands.

According to party sources, JUI-F conveyed its reservations to the organisers, saying the agenda did not align with its manifesto and demands.

Bilawal wants PM to become first premier to complete 5-year term

● Premier not given chance to focus on economic crisis, says PPP chairman

STAFF REPORTER

KARACHI

PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari said on Friday that he wanted Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to become the first premier to complete a five-year term in office.

Since the country came into being in 1947, no elected prime minister has ever completed their five-year term.

Addressing an event in Karachi, Bilawal, citing the economic crisis resulting from the US-Israeli war on Iran, called for "empowering" PM Shehbaz so that he could present a way forward to tackle the crisis.

"My objective is that I want to strengthen the hand of the prime minister [..] usually politicians create difficulties or plot his fall and secure the seat for themselves. I will not do that […] I am saying that I want Shehbaz Sharif to be the first prime minister […] to complete a five-year term," Bilawal said.



Bilawal noted that the prime minister had not been "given the chance" to focus on the economic issues so far.

"What can he do? Whenever he [PM Shehbaz] makes a plan, some federal minister objects and presents their own agenda to divert the topic at hand."

The PPP chairman insisted he wanted the premier to complete his term as he foresaw difficulties ahead for the country.

"I am saying this because I know that there is no consideration for the people of Pakistan. Whether one province is created or a 1,000, the only worry the public has is having access to meals twice a day," Bilawal said, recalling his party's slogan of 'roti, kapra, makan' as primary concerns for the public.

Bilawal reiterated that the premier's "hand should be strengthened" so he can draw attention to the economic issues facing the country. In that regard, he also underscored the need for a "national effort".

"While I am praying for the success of the prime minister, I also believe that if we are to face the real issues of the country, one or two political parties alone cannot achieve this. It has to be a national effort," Bilawal said.

He added that it did not matter whether the government "liked" Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman or PTI founder Imran Khan, who Bilawal said had President Asif Ali Zardari and his sister Faryal Talpur "imprisoned."

Bilawal asserted that he would not do politics "based on ego and personal vendettas" as he believed that it was not "more important than national interest".



OUP conference brings education leaders together to discuss future of learning

STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD

Oxford University Press (OUP) Pakistan brought together school leaders, educationists and practitioners in Islamabad for its School Leaders' Conference 2026 in Islamabad.

Under the theme "Shaping Tomorrow: Navigating Change, Driving Impact," the two-day engagement provided separate platforms for educators from local and international examination board schools to deliberate on the changing educational landscape and the priorities shaping the future of learning.

The conferences explored the evolving responsibilities of school leadership, the integration of technology in education, future-focused skills development and the need to strengthen teaching and learning through effective pedagogical approaches. Discussions also examined how schools can balance innovation with sound educational practices while preparing students for the demands of a rapidly changing world.

Welcoming participants, Arshad Saeed Husain, Managing Director, Oxford University Press Pakistan, said that educational transformation required a collective commitment from school leaders, teachers and the wider education community. "The challenges facing education cannot be addressed through incremental changes alone.

We need school leaders who can recognise emerging needs, support teachers in adapting their practices and place meaningful learning at the centre of every decision. The future depends on how effectively we prepare our schools and students for change," he said.



Free meals introduced three times a day at Bari Imam shrine

STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD

Free meals are being provided three times a day to pilgrims visiting the shrine of Hazrat Bari Imam in Islamabad under an initiative supervised by the district administration.

The Auqaf Directorate is overseeing the arrangements in coordination with the Islamabad district administration, while philanthropists, welfare organisations and social institutions are contributing to the initiative.

According to the administration, arrangements have been made to ensure the provision of quality food in a clean and organised environment, with a coordinated system in place for its distribution among visitors.

Additional Deputy Commissioner General Dr Anam Fatima is supervising the arrangements.

She said the administration's priority was to ensure the dignity and convenience of pilgrims, adding that efforts were under way to make the free meal service a permanent and sustainable initiative.

She said visitors to the shrine would be provided with the best possible facilities.

IUI launches inclusive expository writing for visually impaired students

STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD



Prof. Dr. Ahmed Saad Alahmed, Acting Rector and President, International Islamic University Islamabad (IIUI), inaugurated an Inclusive Expository Writing Program for visually impaired students at the University on Thursday.

He attended the inaugural ceremony as Chief Guest, held at the Smart Classroom of the Faculty of Computing. Prof. Dr. Hafiz Ghufran Ahmed, Student Advisor, Male Campus, IIUI, was also present.

The ceremony was attended by Prof. Dr. Rooh-ul-Amin of Foundation University Islamabad, Dr. Muhammad Farooq Alam of Women University Rawalpindi, and Mr. Muhammad Saurab and Mr. Muhammad Dilawar of Abasyn University.

The 12-week programme is based on the Higher Education Commission's (HEC) Expository Writing course and aims to provide students with special needs an inclusive learning environment. It will enable them to study alongside their fellow students while improving their academic writing skills.

Mr. Mohsin Zaheer, a PhD scholar at Foundation University Islamabad and trainer of the programme, introduced his doctoral research and explained that the programme forms part of its experimental phase. He emphasized the need for a flexible and accessible curriculum to address the diverse academic needs of students.

Addressing the participants, the President encouraged students to make the most of the programme and highlighted the importance of inclusive education in universities.



PESHAWAR: Children performing on a tableau during World Children Day at Forest Ground.

Open Katcheri Held In Allahabad Ward One Rawalpindi

● CEO Aamer Rashid Listens Citizens Issues Orders Immediate Resolution On Cleanliness Taxes

STAFF REPORTER

RAWALPINDI

An Open Katcheri was organized by the Rawalpindi Cantonment Board in Ward No. 1, Allahabad, where Executive Officer Rawalpindi Cantonment Board Aamer Rashid directly listened to the issues and complaints of citizens and issued necessary instructions to the concerned officers for their immediate resolution. A large number of citizens attended the Open Katcheri, while former Cantonment Board members were also present on the occasion.

During the Open Katcheri, citizens presented complaints and applications regarding cleanliness, taxes, streetlights, and other issues. CEO Aamer Rashid attentively listened to the citizens' concerns and directed the concerned officers to take immediate action on the received complaints on a priority basis, while some complaints were resolved on the spot.



On this occasion, Executive Officer Aamer Rashid stated that the purpose of holding Open Katcheris under the Open Door Policy is to provide citizens with an effective platform to directly bring their complaints and issues to the administration and get them resolved. The Cantonment Board administration is utilizing all available resources to resolve public issues and provide better municipal facilities to citizens. Timely redressal of citizens' complaints and provision of quality facilities are among our top priorities.

Chief Cantt Engineer Atiq-ur-Rehman, Assistant Cantt Engineer Naveed Hussain, Secretary Cantonment Board Imran Habib, heads of various branches, and other concerned officers attended the Open Katcheri.

Citizens appreciated the organization of the Open Katcheri and termed this initiative of the Cantonment Board administration a welcome step. They expressed hope that practical and effective measures for the resolution of their issues would continue. Citizens also appreciated the ongoing development and public welfare initiatives in the area.

The Rawalpindi Cantonment Board administration reiterates its commitment to continuing efforts for the provision of better municipal facilities to citizens, immediate resolution of public issues, and development and welfare activities in Cantonment areas in the future as well.

CPO Orders Strict Action Against Criminals Drug Suppliers

● Gambling Dens Immoral Activities Must Not Operate Anywhere In Rawalpindi District Today

STAFF REPORTER

RAWALPINDI

City Police Officer (CPO) Dr Sardar Ghias Gul has directed police officers to intensify efforts against crime, ensure prompt registration of cases and take strict action against drug trafficking, gambling dens and immoral activities across the district.

He issued these directives while chairing a crime review meeting held at Police Lines Headquarters. The meeting was attended by SSP Operations, SSP Investigation, Chief Traffic Officer, SP Headquarters, SP Security, divisional SPs, SDPOs, SHOs and other senior police officials.

During the meeting, the CPO reviewed police performance in combating crime and issued instructions to improve law enforcement and public service delivery.

He made it clear that injustice against any citizen would not be tolerated, adding that those involved in committing crimes deserved to be behind bars.

Dr Ghias Gul also directed officers to ensure that gambling dens and places involved in immoral activities were not allowed to operate anywhere in the district.

He instructed police officials to treat every crime committed against a citizen as if it had happened to them personally, emphasising the need for a proactive and responsible approach towards public safety.

The CPO directed SDPOs and SHOs to ensure timely submission of challans in criminal cases, prompt resolution of public complaints at police stations and registration of cases within the prescribed time limits.

Chairman Senate stresses safe, healthy, dignified future for every child on World Children's Day

STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD

Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani has emphasised the need to ensure a safe, healthy, educated and dignified future for every child, saying children are the foundation of a prosperous, peaceful and progressive society.

In a message on World Children's Day, he said protecting children's rights and providing quality education, healthcare, nutrition and equal opportunities must remain a national priority.

He stressed that children deserved an environment free from violence, exploitation, discrimination and deprivation, where they could develop their full potential.

Gilani said investment in children was an investment in the future of the nation, adding that parliament, government institutions and society must work collectively to safeguard children's rights and promote their welfare.

The Chairman Senate is currently in Bangkok, Thailand, where he is participating in a Save the Children conference titled

"From Policy to Budget: Government Lessons on

Journalists Urged Highlight Population Challenges Through Evidence Reporting

● Youth Bulge Can Become Demographic Dividend With Education Skills Healthcare Investment

STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD

Journalists have been urged to highlight country's population challenges through evidence-based reporting to strengthen public awareness, promote accountability and support the population stabilisation objective.

The call was made during a meeting of the Media Coalition on Population, organised by the Population Council in collaboration with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) under the theme, "From Commitment to Compliance: Media Accountability for Pakistan's Population Stabilisation Agenda."

The meeting brought together journalists from national, provincial and regional media to discuss the role of responsible journalism in highlighting population-related challenges and translating national commitments into practical action.

Welcoming the participants, Dr. Ali Mir, Country Director, Population Council, said that Population stabilisation must be viewed through the lens of human development.

"Journalists can help elevate issues such as maternal and child health, unmet need for family planning, mortality, education and women's empowerment by bringing evidence and lived experiences into public discourse," he added.



National Olive Gala 2026 Announced For December Islamabad

● Pakistan Italy Partnership Boosts Olive Oil Production Health Awareness Across Nation Today

FINANCE REPORTER

ISLAMABAD



Pakistan's rapidly developing olive sector is opening new opportunities for agricultural growth, domestic olive oil production and healthier food consumption, supported by continued cooperation between the Governments of Pakistan and Italy.

These developments were highlighted during the "Media Dialogue on Olive Promotion, Health Utility & Nutritional Significance" at the National Press Club, Islamabad, organized under the OliveCulture Scale-Up Project, implemented by CIHEAM Bari and funded by the Italian Government through the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS), in collaboration with Pakistan's Ministry of National Food Security & Research.

Dr. Francesco De Musso, International Expert from CIHEAM Bari, Italy, highlighted Pakistan's progress in olive sector development, including the expansion of cultivation, strengthening of local processing capacity and improvement of quality standards. He emphasized the importance of advancing domestic production, strengthening the olive value chain and creating opportunities for the sustainable growth of Pakistan's emerging olive industry.

Dr. Fozia Kamal, Gender, Climate and Community Development Expert associated with the OliveCulture Scale-Up Project, highlighted the nutritional significance and health benefits of olives and olive oil. She emphasized the importance of promoting healthier dietary practices, increasing consumer awareness and encouraging the consumption of locally produced olive oil as part of everyday nutrition.

The dialogue emphasized that increasing domestic production must be accompanied by stronger consumer awareness, informed dietary choices and greater market demand to support the long-term sustainability of Pakistan's olive sector.

A major highlight of the occasion was the announcement of the 8th Grand National Olive Gala 2026, scheduled for December 11–13 in Islamabad. The three-day national event will provide a platform for olive growers, producers, processors, businesses and consumers to explore Pakistan's expanding olive industry, promote locally produced olive oil and strengthen connections across the value chain.

The Pakistan–Italy development partnership continues to support the sector through technical cooperation, institutional development, quality enhancement and public awareness initiatives under the OliveCulture Scale-Up Project.

With expanding production capacity, growing institutional support and increasing consumer awareness, Pakistan is moving towards establishing a stronger domestic olive oil market and a more sustainable olive industry.

4,444 tractors assembled in 03 months of FY2026-27

FINANCE REPORTER

ISLAMABAD



Domestic tractor assembling during the first three months of the current financial year decreased by 10.76 per cent compared to the output of the corresponding period of the last year.

During the period from July to September 2026, domestic tractor production was recorded at 4,444 as against the production of 4,980 tractors, according to data of the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics released here on Friday.

On a month-on-month basis, about 663 tractors were assembled locally as compared to the production of 1,279 tractors of August.

The output of the Large Scale Manufacturing Industries (LSMI) during the first three months of the current financial year grew by 2.07 per cent as compared to the output of the corresponding period of the last year.

PSX, UNICEF, Pakistan Business Council ring the bell for children on World Children's Day



FINANCE REPORTER

KARACHI

Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX), in collaboration with UNICEF and the Pakistan Business Council (PBC), hosted a Ring the Bell for Children ceremony at PSX on World Children's Day, calling on businesses to put children's rights at the heart of their decisions, policies and practices.

The bell-ringing ceremony marked Pakistan's participation in the global campaign led by UNICEF and the United Nations Sustainable Stock Exchanges (UN SSE) initiative, bringing together stock exchanges across 25 countries and five continents to encourage businesses and investors to consider children's rights in their decisions and practices.

The event also marked the launch of the report, Making Children Count: Sustainability Reporting in Pakistan, presenting a first-ever assessment of the reporting of 98 companies listed on the Pakistan Stock Exchange against 29 indicators related to children's rights and business.

The assessment found out that 78% of the companies reviewed reported community investments benefiting children, while children remain less visible in reporting governance, human rights due diligence, workplaces practices, supply chains, products and services, and climate and environmental considerations.

ECC approves SME export financing reforms, key TSGs

● Export Threshold Lowered From Eighty Percent To Fifty Percent For Small Exporters

FINANCE REPORTER

ISLAMABAD



The Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet on Friday approved facilitative measures to promote SME exports, alongside Technical Supplementary Grants (TSGs) for various ministries and divisions.

The ECC meeting chaired by Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb at the Finance Division, approved amendments to the Long Term Export Growth Financing Facility, administered through EXIM Bank of Pakistan, to facilitate small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and support emerging exporters.

The amendments have lowered the minimum threshold of 80 percent exports to 50 percent within four years. The Committee also directed a review of progress after six months.

The ECC also approved a summary submitted by the Finance Division for the provision of TSG for execution of National Economic Initiatives (NEI) projects, underscoring the importance of NEI projects in advancing key national development priorities.

On a summary submitted by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony, the ECC approved a TSG of Rs. 100 million for Minorities Welfare Fund (MWF). These funds will support financial assistance, scholarships, marriage grants for orphan minority girls, emergency relief and repair of minority places of worship.

The ECC also approved three separate summaries requiring approval of various TSGs submitted by the Ministry of Interior and Narcotics Control. These included a TSG of Rs. 26.500 million for the purchase of helicopter spare parts for Pakistan Rangers (Punjab) to meet its maintenance requirements; a TSG of Rs. 100 million to meet the salary requirements of the Social Media Protection and Regulatory Authority (SMPRA) and the Social Media Complaint Council (SMCC) for FY 2026-27; and a further TSG of Rs. 67 million for the annual repair and maintenance of helicopters under use by the Frontier Corps Balochistan (North).

On a summary submitted by the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training, the Committee approved modification of its earlier decision regarding the release of Rs. 2 billion for the Daanish Schools Authority. The modification allows utilisation of Rs. 500 million from the released amount to meet the operational expenses of Daanish Schools during FY 2026-27, including salaries, boarding, utilities, transport, security and maintenance.

The ECC also considered a summary summitted by Petroleum Division and approved a TSG of Rs. 1 billion for settlement of the outstanding guaranteed throughput claim of Pak-Arab Pipeline Company Limited (PAPCO).

On a summary submitted by the Ministry of National Food Security and Research, the ECC considered the recommendations of Cabinet Committee headed by Deputy Prime Minister regarding exports of Sugar to safeguard farmers' interests in the form of adequate price support for their produce. The Committee also reiterated the importance of deregulating the sugar sector.

The meeting was attended by Federal Minister for Board of Investment Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh; Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research Rana Tanveer Hussain; Federal Minister for Power Sardar Awais Ahmad Khan Leghari; Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan; Minister of State for Finance Bilal Azhar Kiyani; and along with Federal Secretaries and senior officials from the relevant Ministries, Divisions and departments.

Punjab Releases Rs3.27b For Government Schools Across The Province

FINANCE REPORTER

LAHORE



Punjab releases Rs3.27b in non-development funds for government schools across the province. The money will help schools meet welfare needs and other related costs.

According to the details, the funds have been shared among many districts. Each district has received its own amount to support schools in its area.

Lahore has received Rs134.1 million, while Multan has been given Rs105.4 million. Bahawalpur has received Rs114.9 million, and Attock has been allocated Rs64.3 million.

Narowal will get Rs61.1 million. Vehari has received Rs100 million, and Mianwali has been given Rs87.8 million.

Faisalabad has received two separate releases. One allocation is Rs134.1 million, and another Rs180 million has also been released for the district.

Several other districts have also received funds. Toba Tek Singh and Jhang have each been given Rs100 million. Sialkot has received Rs110 million, and Sheikhupura has been allocated Rs90 million.

Hafizabad will get Rs40 million, while Gujrat has received Rs90 million. Gujranwala has been given Rs100 million.

Non-development funds are used for regular needs rather than new building projects. In schools, this can mean small repairs, cleaning, utility bills and other daily expenses.

The released money can be used for the welfare of government schools and their related requirements. This will help school heads manage essential costs without delay.

Many government schools often face shortages of basic items. Timely funds can make it easier for schools to keep classrooms clean, safe and ready for students.

Parents and teachers hope the money will be spent properly and on time. They also want to see real improvement in school facilities.

CDWP clears seven projects worth Rs19.3bn, refers four worth Rs172.4bn to ECNEC

FINANCE REPORTER

ISLAMABAD



Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives/Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission Professor Ahsan Iqbal on Friday chaired a meeting of the Central Development Working Party (CDWP) that approved seven development projects worth Rs19.3 billion and recommended four projects costing Rs172.4 billion to the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (ECNEC).

The meeting considered 11 projects with a combined estimated cost of Rs191.8 billion, covering agriculture, infrastructure, governance, health, information technology, manpower and employment, power, transport and communications, and environment.

In the agriculture sector, the forum recommended Punjab's Resilient and Inclusive Agriculture Transformation (PRIAT) project, costing Rs104.4 billion, to ECNEC.

Financed through the World Bank and the Punjab government, the project aims to improve farmers' incomes, ensure equitable access to agricultural water and enhance water-use efficiency through improved irrigation infrastructure, solar-powered irrigation systems, water storage ponds, certified seeds and plants, crop diversification and better market linkages.

The CDWP approved the Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission's Exploration of Radioactive Minerals in Marwat Range project at a cost of Rs1.4 billion, aimed at reducing reliance on imported fuel for nuclear power generation.

It also approved the revised Strengthening Institutions for Refugees' Administration (SIRA) project worth Rs255.8 million, sponsored by the Ministry of Kashmir Affairs, Gilgit-Baltistan and States and Frontier Regions.

In the health sector, the forum approved the modified and revised project for establishment of Mirwaiz Molvi Muhammad Farooq Shaheed Medical College, Muzaffarabad, at a cost of Rs3.415 billion. It also cleared the Expansion of Cellular Services in Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan project worth Rs4.4 billion.

The CDWP gave in-principle approval to the third revised Prime Minister's Youth Skill Development Programme (2023-28), costing Rs47.6 billion, and referred it to ECNEC. Ahsan Iqbal directed that the project cost be rationalised and duplication of work avoided.

SBP injects over Rs 13.5 trillion to maintain liquidity in the market

FINANCE REPORTER

KARACHI



The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), Friday, injected Rs 13,544.5 billion through Reverse Repo Purchase and Shariah Compliant Mudarabah based Open Market Operations (OMO) for maintaining liquidity in the market.

The central bank conducted the Open Market Operation, Reverse Repo Purchase (Injection) for 7 and 14-day tenors on November 20, 2026, and injected Rs 13,156.4 billion against 44 quotes while other Rs 388.1 billion were injected through Shariah Compliant Mudarabah based OMO.

The central bank, for the Reverse Repo Purchase of 14-day tenor, received 37 bids cumulatively offering Rs 12,834 billion at the rate of return ranging between 12.00% to 12.09%.

The SBP accepted Rs 12,400 billion against 36 quotes at 12.01% rate of return. The total amount offered at 12.01% was Rs 5,711.3 billion, out of which SBP accepted Rs 5,278.3 billion on a pro rata basis.

Moreover, the SBP also received 8 bids for the 7-day tenor, cumulatively offering Rs 756.4 billion at the rate of return ranging between 12.01% to 12.06 %. The SBP accepted all the 8 quotes with the entire amount at 12.01% rate of return.

Meanwhile, SBP also conducted Shariah Compliant Mudarabah-based Open Market Operation for the 7 and 14-day tenors.

Commerce Minister calls for stronger trade, investment ties with South Africa

● South Africa Invited To Explore Mining Minerals IT Halal Products In Pakistan

FINANCE REPORTER

ISLAMABAD

A high-level South African business delegation led by Dr. Gwen Malegwala Ramokgopa, Treasure General of the African National Congress and Group Chair of the Progressive Business Forum (PBF) called on the Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan in Ministry of Commerce, Islamabad.

During the meeting ways and means were discussed to enhance bilateral trade, investment and business-to-business cooperation between Pakistan and South Africa, said a release issued here on Friday.

The Federal Minister for Commerce highlighted the untapped potential of bilateral trade and emphasized the need for closer engagement between the business communities and chambers of commerce of Pakistan and South Africa to identify trade barriers explore investment opportunities and promote joint ventures.

He further explained that there exists vast potential of mutual cooperation in various promising sectors like agriculture, IT, mining and minerals, dairy, livestock and halal products.

He also invited South African investors to explore opportunities in Pakistan's mining and critical minerals sectors, along with mineral processing, gemstone cutting, polishing and jewellery manufacturing.

The Minister for Commerce highlighted Pakistan's growing information technology sector and skilled young workforce as potential avenues for collaboration.

Casablanca 1994: When Collective Efforts Turned The Impossible Into Possible

Dr. Ghulam Nabi Fai (Chairman World Form for Peace & Justice)



An inspiring lesson from the past for the Kashmiri diaspora: collective action, timely diplomatic initiative and open channels of communication can produce outcomes that once seemed beyond reach.

Today, I came across a social media post by Dr. Syed Nazir Gilani, a distinguished jurist and President of the Jammu Kashmir Council for Human Rights (JKCHR), an NGO accredited with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). His post recalled some important developments surrounding the Seventh Islamic Summit, held in Casablanca, Morocco, from December 13 to 15, 1994.

Dr. Gilani referred to the important role played by the Kashmiri delegation in preparing a substantive OIC resolution on Kashmir, which called for urgent humanitarian assistance for the people of Jammu and Kashmir. He also recalled that aide-mémoires were presented to the heads of state attending the Summit.

His post brought back fond memories of an extraordinary diplomatic initiative in which a small group of Kashmiris, working together at a critical moment, helped secure an outcome that initially appeared almost impossible.

I was invited by Dr. Hamid Al-Gabid, the then Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), to attend the Seventh Islamic Summit in Casablanca. The All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) had been formed in Kashmir just a year earlier, on March 9, 1993. I felt that it would be particularly significant if an APHC delegation could also participate in this important international gathering.

I subsequently learned that invitations had also been extended to Dr. Syed Nazir Gilani, Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, Maulana Abbas Ansari, Sardar Mohammad Qayyum Khan, then Prime Minister of Azad Kashmir, Sardar Sikander Hayat Khan, then President of Azad Kashmir, and Khalid Hasan, a well-known journalist. I contacted Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, who confirmed that the invitations had been received.

Although the Summit was scheduled to begin on December 13, I decided to arrive in Casablanca a day earlier. Soon after my arrival, I met one of the senior diplomats from Pakistan's Foreign Office. To my surprise, he was not even aware that Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, Chairman of the APHC, would be attending the Summit.

The diplomat explained that securing a reference to Kashmir in the Casablanca Declaration would be extremely difficult. The usual practice was that all declarations and resolutions were drafted in advance by senior officials of the foreign ministries of OIC member states, approved by foreign ministers and ultimately adopted by the heads of state and government.

I impressed upon him that the Chairman of the APHC was attending an OIC Islamic Summit for the first time. It would be unfortunate if such an important occasion passed without any meaningful reference to Kashmir. He advised me to approach Nawabzada Nasrullah Khan, Chairman of Pakistan's Parliamentary Kashmir Committee, who was also attending the Summit.

Dr. Syed Nazir Gilani and I met Nawabzada Nasrullah Khan and explained the importance of securing a meaningful reference to Kashmir. He immediately understood the seriousness of the situation. Without wasting time, he called Jalil Asghar Jeelani, who had been deputed by the Foreign Office to assist him, and asked him to arrange a meeting with Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto.

Dr. Gilani and I subsequently briefed Prime Minister Bhutto. We emphasized that the presence of the APHC Chairman at the Summit should translate into tangible progress on Kashmir.

What happened next demonstrated the power of timely diplomatic intervention. We later learned that Prime Minister Bhutto had personally contacted the office of His Majesty King Hassan II of Morocco. Her intervention had a remarkable impact. Multiple resolutions on Kashmir, extending to twenty-one pages, were adopted, and the Kashmir issue became an important part of the Casablanca Declaration.

Most significantly, seven consecutive paragraphs, Items 53 to 59, were devoted to Jammu and Kashmir. The Declaration recognized the APHC as the "True Representatives of the people of Jammu and Kashmir."

Item 58 was particularly significant. It welcomed the establishment of the OIC Contact Group on Jammu and Kashmir at the United Nations and called upon the Contact Group to continue its efforts to promote the right of self-determination of the Kashmiri people in accordance with United Nations resolutions and to safeguard their fundamental human rights.

Two important institutional developments followed from this diplomatic initiative. First, the OIC Contact Group on Jammu and Kashmir was established. Its membership included Pakistan, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Niger, Morocco, the OIC Secretary General and the APHC, in accordance with the arrangements made at the time.

The inaugural meeting of the Contact Group was held at the heads-of-state level. It was chaired by Turkish President Suleyman Demirel and attended by the President of Niger, Crown Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia, Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, OIC Secretary General Dr. Hamid Al-Gabid, representatives of Morocco and the APHC delegation. Crown Prince Abdullah addressed the Kashmir Contact Group in Arabic, with his remarks translated into English by Prince Saud Al-Faisal, the Saudi Foreign Minister.

Geopolitics of a transitioning order

By Dr Muhammad Reza Bahrami Taghanaki



Relations between Iran and Pakistan cannot be analysed solely within the framework of conventional ties between two neighbours. This relationship exists at a juncture where its quality impacts the security, development, and economic linkages of a significant portion of Asia.

The regional and international order is currently in a phase of transition, where traditional power paradigms intersect with imperatives such as diversifying trade routes, securing supply chains, competing over transit corridors and redefining strategic partnerships. Under these circumstances, geographical proximity if managed astutely can be transformed into an asset for cooperation and the generation of shared power.

The improvement in relations between Tehran and Islamabad across governmental, societal and elite levels over the past year offers an opportunity to shift from ad hoc management towards designing a more enduring relationship. Sustaining this trajectory requires translating political will into institutional mechanisms, tangible economic benefits and continuous cooperation. The core challenge is converting this improvement into a lasting asset one capable of demonstrating resilience against political shifts, external pressures and regional crises.

The strategic value of the two nations' geography becomes apparent when connectivity routes, trade policies and border security generate mutual benefits. In this context, the concept of 'mutual strategic depth' does not imply dependency; rather, it signifies an expansion of the range of strategic choices available to each country through cooperation. Economic cooperation, diplomatic coordination and the responsible management of security issues can provide both sides with a broader range of options for addressing external pressures.

The expansion of political contacts, the pursuit of security and economic cooperation, and a focus on managing border issues demonstrate that there is significant potential to strengthen cooperation between the two nations. A key achievement of this period is creating an opportunity to transform political dialogue into mutual trust, translate that trust into practical cooperation and ultimately yield benefits that both parties can preserve.

Sustaining the confidence-building process requires acknowledging the reality that Tehran and Islamabad may hold differing views on certain regional issues or on how to engage with external actors. Divergent perspectives are natural in state-to-state relations; what matters is ensuring that communication mechanisms prevent a disagreement in one area from disrupting the overall relationship. Regular dialogue, direct contact between relevant institutions and clear crisis-management channels can help prevent misunderstandings and the unintended escalation of tensions.

In this context, Pakistan's mediation efforts regarding tensions between Iran and the US highlight Iran's geopolitical significance in Islamabad's regional calculus, as well as the bilateral relationship's potential to manage crises that extend beyond the immediate region.

A nation without a compass

By Atta-ur-Rahman



Pakistan today is a nation without a compass – a failed education system, mass migration of talent abroad due to lack of jobs, collapsing industries, mega corruption and gross incompetence of the ruling elite.

Pakistan's failure is not a failure of its people. It is a failure of direction, and the distance it has fallen can be measured. In 1978, China was poorer per head than Pakistan. Within four decades, it lifted some 800 million people out of poverty, became the world's largest exporter, and took the lead in electric vehicles, solar power and high-speed rail. Pakistan, over the same years, went to the IMF more than twenty times and has been doomed by IMF policies to sink into a mountain of debt.

Consider Singapore. It has no farmland, no oil and no minerals, and only 6.1 million people on an island a fraction of the size of Karachi. Yet in 2025 it exported goods worth about $566 billion. Pakistan, with 252 million people, exported about $30.6 billion. Even allowing for the trade that merely passes through Singapore's port, the gap is staggering: roughly $93,000 in exports for every Singaporean citizen against about $120 for every Pakistani.

As a result of corrupt and incompetent leadership, public spending on education fell to 0.8 per cent of GDP in FY2024-25, down from 1.9 per cent in 2019-20, against an international benchmark of 4-6 per cent. Some 26 million children are out of school. National spending on research and development has slipped to about 0.16 per cent of GDP, from 0.22 per cent a decade ago. Transparency International's 2025 index gives Pakistan 28 points out of 100 and ranks it 136th of 182 nations. And the young are voting with their feet: more than 762,000 workers registered for employment abroad in 2025, after 727,000 the year before, and nearly 2.9 million have gone since 2022.

How did a country of such talent arrive here?

The first reason is that it never chose a direction. Every nation that escaped poverty in the last half-century first answered a simple question: what will we be good at, and how will we get there? South Korea chose electronics and ships. China chose manufacturing, then science. Pakistan never answered. Meanwhile, the basis of wealth shifted. It now flows from knowledge: semiconductors, software, biotechnology, artificial intelligence, advanced materials. Land and cheap labour count for little.

The second reason is that Pakistan starved the mind. No country has become rich with an uneducated population, yet Pakistan behaves as if it could be the first. Children who do reach school too often sit in buildings without water or teachers, memorising notes for examinations that reward recall over thought. The colleges and universities above them are starved in turn: higher-education budgets have been largely frozen while the rupee lost its value, and faculties are losing their best researchers. Nor is there any innovation policy to connect what little research is done to the economy. No ministry is held answerable for high-technology exports. Private industry contributes less than a tenth of the nation's meagre research spending.

The third reason follows from the first two: an economy that makes nothing sophisticated creates no jobs for the educated. Nearly two-thirds of Pakistanis are under-30. This should be the greatest asset any nation could ask for. Instead, it has become a queue at the passport office.

The fourth reason is corruption, which in Pakistan is not petty leakage but a system. Contracts are inflated, loans are written off, public land is gifted and the proceeds are parked abroad. Accountability arrives only as a weapon against whoever is out of power.

Behind all of these stands the deepest reason: poor political leadership, produced by a system that can produce nothing better. Our parliamentary system fills the cabinet from the assemblies, and the assemblies from the ranks of landlords, dynasts and electables who know how to win a constituency but not how to run energy, finance or science. Beneath them, secretaries are generalists shuffled between ministries every few months.

What, then, must change? China shows that even a vast and poor nation can be transformed within a generation, and it shows how. It chose a direction and held it.

Cannibalism In Pakistan: A Legal Vacuum Behind One Of The Country's Most Disturbing Criminal Cases

By Hina Azam



Cannibalism, disgusting? Pakistan has witnessed many criminal cases over the years, but few have raised questions as serious as the cannibalism cases reported in Darya Khan, a town in Bhakkar District of Punjab. This incident, which first came to public attention in 2011 and resurfaced in 2014, drew international media attention.

This case involved two brothers, Mohammad Arif Ali and Mohammad Farman Ali, who were arrested in April 2011 after police discovered evidence that they had dug up graves and consumed human flesh. According to contemporary news reports, the discovery involved the remains of a woman who had recently been buried. The brothers were later arrested, convicted, and sentenced to two years in prison, with a Rs. 50,000 fine each, according to reports published at the time.

In April 2014, police once again raided their residence after receiving complaints from neighbours. This time, investigators discovered the remains of a young child who had been buried in a nearby graveyard. Police arrested one brother immediately, and later apprehended the other. The incident brought the brothers back into the national spotlight. In June 2014, an Anti Terrorism Court sentenced both brothers to 12 years of imprisonment each. Their prosecution just involved offences relating to the desecration of graves, destruction of property and spreading fear.

The Legal Void

Now, what actually is the creepiest thing about all that? It's not the consumption of human flesh , it's not the disrespect of the dead and not even the murder. It's actually that there is not a single law against cannibalism till now.

In Pakistan, where burial traditions and respect for the deceased hold considerable religious and cultural importance, disturbing a grave is particularly offensive. When that expectation is violated, the consequences extend beyond the immediate criminal incident. The psychological dimension cannot be ignored. Though it would be incorrect to automatically classify every person involved in cannibalistic behaviour as mentally ill.

Section 297 of the Pakistan Penal Code, 1860, provides protection against the desecration of burial places and indignity towards human corpses. However, its failure to explicitly address cannibalism raises questions about the adequacy of Pakistan's existing criminal legislation. The Bhakkar incidents exposed the need to examine whether existing legal provisions are sufficient to address such extraordinary criminal conduct.

The Bhakkar incidents were not simply isolated criminal events. The recurrence of similar allegations involving the same individuals, even after imprisonment, exposed serious questions about the effectiveness of Pakistan's criminal justice response.

The 2018 reports further intensified concerns about whether existing legislation was adequate to address such conduct. The question, therefore, is not merely how such incidents occurred, but why the legal and institutional response struggled to prevent their recurrence. Even after 12 years, no law still exists against this atrocious crime. When those brothers are released, what evidence is there that they will not repeat this grievous offence again?

Many countries, such as Botswana, Nigeria, and the United States-Idaho, have strict laws against this heinous act with explicitly deterrent punishments. Botswana specifically has section 201A, which addresses unlawful consumption of human flesh, body parts and human remains. Section 201 B- cannibalism- makes intentional consumption of human blood or flesh a criminal offence.

These cannibal brothers are released from prison on July 1, 2026. They are completely free now,back in their hometown. These two men are walking free today just because the parliament was too busy to pass a simple law against cannibalism in 15 years.

Are the authorities waiting for another cannibalistic incident to happen? The government's failure to close such a legal loophole is unacceptable.

We need a proper solution for such atrocities; if this has caught attention, it doesn't mean that this isn't happening anymore.

What are the governments actually doing? Why are they reticent about all these abominable acts?

If law cannot protect the dignity of the dead, then what exactly is it protecting? If lawmakers themselves recognised the need for punishments as severe as life imprisonment, what has prevented Pakistan from translating that recognition into effective legislation? This raises a serious question about Pakistan's legislative system: even after 15 years, there is still no specific law addressing cannibalism. Would the government take responsibility after the Ali brothers are released and repeat this abominable act again?

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US Religious Freedom Panel Says India Is Targeting Minorities During Voter Roll Revisions Nationwide



WEB DESK

WASHINGTON

A US religious freedom panel has accused India of stepping up its targeting of religious minorities during a nationwide voter list revision. The group said on Thursday that the exercise has struck off tens of millions of names.

The US Commission on International Religious Freedom, or USCIRF, made the claim in a public statement. Its chair, Asif Mahmood, said the Indian government is going after Muslim citizens in several ways.

He said Muslims are being removed from voter rolls and called "foreigners". He added that some are now being illegally deported.

The revision removed about 130 million names. That is roughly the population of Mexico, and it is the largest deletion of voters in India's history.

Data shows the omissions hit Muslims the hardest. Muslims are India's largest minority group.

Rights groups say Muslims have faced exclusionary policies and growing discrimination since Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party took power in 2014.

India's Election Commission has a different account. It says it is only removing duplicate, dead, relocated and otherwise ineligible voters. It adds that anyone dropped by mistake can file an appeal.

The voter list drive has also become tied to a separate push to find and expel suspected illegal immigrants. Yet being removed from the rolls does not prove that a person is a foreigner.

USCIRF commissioner Gene Mills called the expulsion of citizens based on their faith a shocking escalation. He said it shows a worrying turn in tactics aimed at religious minorities.

Mills urged the State Department to name India a "country of particular concern". That label is used for governments seen as committing severe religious freedom violations.

It is worth noting that USCIRF is a bipartisan US government body. It monitors religious freedom worldwide and offers policy advice, but its recommendations are not binding.

Washington has not acted on its recent advice on India. US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said last month that the voter list issue was a domestic political matter. He said the United States would not comment on it.

India's foreign ministry has described USCIRF as biased. New Delhi has often rejected such criticism and called it interference in its internal affairs. The Indian embassy in Washington did not answer a request for comment.

The revision has also sparked protests in recent weeks. Opposition groups and student demonstrators say it affects people who are unlikely to vote for the BJP. Rights experts have criticised the government's crackdown on those protests.

UN experts and human rights groups say abuse of minorities has grown under Modi. They point to rising hate speech and a religion-based citizenship law that the UN calls fundamentally discriminatory. They also cite the demolition of Muslim-owned properties, the loss of Kashmir's autonomy and anti-conversion laws that challenge freedom of belief.

The Indian government denies any bias. It says its policies, including food subsidies and electrification drives, help all communities.

Civil rights advocates have also criticised the treatment of Muslims in the United States.



UNITED KINGDOM: High Commissioner of Pakistan to the United Kingdom, Mr. Tipu Usman Presents Credentials to His Majesty King Charles III at St James's Palace.

British-Pakistani Businessman Receives Freedom Of The City Of London

● Nasir Younas, who arrived from Lahore with just £200 and little English, is honoured at Guildhall for his work in business, hospitality and charity

NEWS DESK

LONDON

A British-Pakistani businessman receives one of London's oldest honours. Nasir Younas, an entrepreneur from Lahore, was given the Freedom of the City of London at Guildhall.

The ceremony took place in the Chamberlain's Court. Family, friends and leaders from business and public life came to watch.

Mr Younas was honoured for his services to business, the hospitality industry and philanthropy in the UK. He read the Declaration of a Freeman and signed the Register of Freemen. He was then greeted as a Citizen of London.

The Freedom of the City is a very old tradition. It is believed to have begun in 1237. At first, it allowed holders to carry out their trade within the city.

Many famous people have received this honour. They include Princess Elizabeth, Queen Elizabeth II, Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother and Diana, Princess of Wales.



Winston Churchill and Margaret Thatcher also hold the Freedom. So do world leaders such as Jawaharlal Nehru and Nelson Mandela. American presidents Theodore Roosevelt and Dwight D. Eisenhower are on the list too.

The list also includes Professor Stephen Hawking, Jimmy Choo, Morgan Freeman, J. K. Rowling, Sir Michael Caine and George Helon JP.

Speaking after the ceremony, Mr Younas said he arrived in London in 2004 with £200 that his father had borrowed. He spoke very little English and knew nobody who could guide him.

"To stand in Guildhall today and be greeted as a Citizen of London is the proudest moment of my working life," he said. He added that London deserves much of the credit, because the city educated him and built him.

He also shared a simple thought about his early plans. He came to London meaning to earn some money and go home. Instead, London made him stay, and moving here became the first step towards everything he dreamed of.

Mr Younas grew up in Ghoray Shah, near Lahore. He was the eldest son of a shopkeeper.

From the age of 14, he opened his father's grocery shop at six o'clock every Sunday morning. His friends were playing cricket at the time.

When he reached London, he found work in the basement of a restaurant on Oxford Street. He boiled rice from 11am to 10pm and earned £40 a day.

From that hard start, he built a career in business and hospitality.

Pakistan Türkiye Explore Cooperation In Digital Media Governance

● Both Sides Focus On Combating Misinformation Protecting Children Online Safety Together Today

STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD

Minister of State / Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Digital Media Fahd Haroon received a high-level delegation from the Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye, led by Prof. Ferhat Pirinççi, Deputy Head of Communications at its Directorate of Communications. His Excellency Dr. İrfan Neziroİlu, Ambassador of the Republic of Türkiye to Pakistan, was also present on the occasion.

Discussions centred on strengthening institutional collaboration, sharing expertise and best practices and exploring new avenues for bilateral exchanges. Key areas included combating misinformation and disinformation, promoting online safety, safeguarding children in the digital environment and addressing emerging challenges posed by digital platforms. Both sides also discussed digital media regulation, responsible online communication and effective institutional responses to the evolving digital landscape.



Fahd Haroon emphasised that responsible governance of the digital space, the protection of citizens online and countering misinformation and disinformation are essential to building a safe, credible and accountable digital ecosystem. He underscored Pakistan's commitment to strengthening institutional capacities, promoting responsible digital engagement and working closely with Türkiye to address emerging challenges through closer institutional collaboration and the exchange of expertise and best practices.

The Turkish delegation also included Kasım İleri, Head of the Department of Strategic Communications and Crisis Management at the Directorate of Communications, Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye, along with other senior officials.

Also in attendance from the Pakistani side were Ms. Ambreen Jan, Chairperson PEMRA; Barrister Sikandar Chaudhry, Executive Member PEMRA; representatives of media institutions and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Both sides expressed their shared desire to further strengthen bilateral ties through continued dialogue, closer institutional engagement and expanded exchanges of expertise in areas of mutual interest, building on the longstanding bonds of friendship and brotherhood between Pakistan and Türkiye.

Musadik Malik Arrives In India For SCO Cultural Forum In Rare Visit



WEB DESK

NEW DELHI

Musadik Malik arrives in India on Friday to take part in a regional conference in New Delhi. Officials say he is the first Pakistani minister to visit at this level since last year's deadly conflict between the two nuclear-armed neighbours.

Malik serves as Pakistan's Federal Minister for Climate Change. He will represent his country at a cultural meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO). The Pakistan High Commission in India confirmed his trip.

The meeting runs for four days. Its goal is to celebrate the rich and shared heritage of the region. It also aims to build stronger ties between people and to encourage open talks across cultures.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi is expected to speak at the "Civilisational Dialogue Forum." The forum brings together the 10 member countries of the bloc.

This trip stands out for another reason. No Pakistani minister has visited India for an SCO event since Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, then foreign minister, attended a meeting in Goa in May 2023.

India's Foreign Minister, Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, also travelled to Islamabad in 2024 for a meeting of the same bloc. So both countries have sent senior leaders to each other's soil in recent years, though not often.

Relations between the two rivals have been tense since 2025. They fought a four-day conflict that year. It began after an attack on tourists in Kashmir, which led to fierce exchanges between the two armies.

Because of that history, many people will watch this visit closely. A cultural forum is not a political summit. Still, it gives both sides a chance to be in the same room.

Officials have not said whether Malik will hold any separate talks with Indian leaders. For now, his role is to take part in the SCO programme and speak for Pakistan.

Observers say such meetings can help lower tension. Even small steps, like a minister's visit, may keep channels of contact open between two countries that have little direct dialogue.

India and Pakistan have fought multiple wars since gaining independence in 1947, primarily over the disputed Muslim-majority region of Kashmir, which both countries claim in full but administer in part.

Malik's visit is the first by a Pakistani federal minister since former foreign minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari attended an SCO foreign ministers' meeting in Goa in May 2023.

The SCO, which includes China and Russia, has provided one of the few platforms for senior Indian and Pakistani officials to visit each other's countries despite their strained relations.

Central Florida Flood Watch Extended After 15 Inches Of Rain In 24 Hours

● Slow-moving storms have soaked the state for three days, with Broward County facing the worst of the flooding

WEB DESK

FLORIDA

Central Florida and the southern part of the state are dealing with serious flooding after heavy rain fell for a third day in a row. Slow-moving storms began on Tuesday and have not eased up since.

Water rescues, evacuations, and school closures are now happening in many areas. Many families have had to leave their homes in a hurry.

Broward County has taken the hardest hit. The National Weather Service in Miami says some places, including Hollywood and Plantation, got about 15 inches of rain in less than 24 hours.



Rescue teams have been working around the clock to clear streets and help people stuck in the water.

The rain has also broken records. Melbourne has had its wettest month since 1937, with 22.59 inches since November 19. That is almost 13 inches more than the old November record set in 1963.

Governor Ron DeSantis has declared an emergency for Broward County. Hundreds of National Guard members have been sent in, along with 50 high-water vehicles, airboats, and swamp buggies.

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission said its crews helped more than 90 people at a flooded apartment complex. In another case, a police officer carried a child who had stopped breathing to emergency workers after a car got stuck in the water.

A rare "high risk" flood warning is also in place for parts of the Atlantic coast, including Daytona Beach and Titusville. According to NOAA, about half of the days marked "high risk" end in a flood death or injury.

Forecasters blame El Niño for the unusual weather. It strengthens the subtropical jet stream, which pushes extra moisture over the state.

The dry season normally runs from October to May. This year, the pattern looks more like summer thunderstorm season.

Spanish police used excessive force during general strike, Amnesty says

NEWS DESK

MADRID

Spanish police used excessive force against protesters and journalists during last week's general strike, rights group Amnesty International said on Friday.

Amnesty said police used pepper spray, batons, tear gas and rubber bullets, and left 36 people injured, 5 of them hospitalised.

The NGO said it İhad documented incidents in Barcelona, Malaga, Valencia, Alicante and Granada, as well as Madrid, where it said demonstrators were not given any warning before police charged.

Asked for comment by Reuters, the Interior Ministry pointed to its announcement the day after the strike that the use İof pepper spray during demonstrations would be curbed.

Madrid police authorities on Thursday opened an internal investigation to assess officers' actions in the capital.

Journalists were İpushed and hit with batons while covering the strike, Amnesty said.

The group said its findings were based İon interviews with 24 people. It called on authorities to carry out an "in-depth review İof the protocols and rules that regulate police action at demonstrations".



Prince William spends his last day in Mumbai visiting Karan Johar's studio, watching dancers

SHOWBIZ DESK

MUMBAI

Britain's Prince William watched Bollywood dances and toured a film studio in Mumbai on the last day of his royal visit to India, while his wife, Kate Middleton, spoke to health workers at a maternity hospital in the city.

The royal couple, who were on a three-day visit to India's financial capital, ended their trip in New Delhi and also met Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

William and Kate had separate engagements earlier in the day, with the prince visiting the office of a prominent Bollywood production house, Dharma Productions, in suburban Mumbai, while Kate visited a maternity hospital in the centre of the city.

William smiled and clapped as dancers moved to the song 'Bole Chudiyan' from Dharma's hit Bollywood movie, Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham, which is set partly in London. Actors Saif Ali Khan and Kareena Kapoor were also present.

"He was gracious and kind and spoke extensively about the potential of Indian cinema and how cinema across all Indian languages is loved worldwide," said filmmaker Karan Johar, who runs Dharma Productions, after the visit.

The royal couple have been on a whirlwind tour of the city of 13 million since Monday, playing cricket with the retired Sachin Tendulkar, visiting a craft school and attending the glittering award ceremony for the Earthshot Prize, a climate-change award that William set up six years ago.

The Princess of Wales, on her most high-profile overseas visit since receiving treatment for cancer in 2024, also presented one of the awards on Tuesday night, wearing a bright red Indian-style gown.

In his speech at the awards ceremony on Tuesday, William said the impact of global warming was becoming conspicuous, with repeated heatwaves and devastating floods, calling it a pivotal moment for the planet.

HRCP warns Punjab theatre bill could put government beyond criticism

- Calls it a gross violation of artistic freedom and the right to freedom of expression

SHOWBIZ REPORTER

LAHORE



The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) raised alarm over the recently passed Punjab Dramatic and Theatrical Performances Bill 2026, warning that the legislation would undermine artistic freedom and incite dissatisfaction towards the government by barring free speech.

Yesterday, the Punjab Assembly witnessed bitter exchanges and confrontations between treasury and opposition members over alleged obscenity in theatres, regulation of performances and a proposed mechanism, before the government got the Punjab Dramatic and Theatrical Performances Bill 2026 passed.

In a statement issued on the social media platform X, it said, "HRCP is deeply concerned that the recently passed Punjab Dramatic and Theatrical Performances Bill 2026 effectively places the government beyond satire and criticism."

It further warned that "prohibiting performances" would likely create disaffection towards the government.

"[It] is a gross violation of artistic freedom and the right to freedom of expression."

It also raised concerns over the bill's mandatory licensing requirements, government-controlled script reviews and censorship mechanisms, arguing that these provisions institutionalised state control over artistic and cultural activities through threats of fines and imprisonment.

It is worth noting that Article 3 of the bill states, "Prohibition of certain dramatic or theatrical performances.– No dramatic or theatrical performances shall be held which are: (a) scandalous or defamatory; or (b) likely to excite feelings of disaffection to the Government; or (c) likely to deprave and corrupt persons present at the performance; or (d) obscene or vulgar; or (e) inciting hatred or hurting religious feelings; or (f) any other performance as may be prescribed."

The HRCP announced that it would convene a consultation with artistes and other relevant stakeholders to examine the legislation's implications and discuss possible measures to safeguard artistic and cultural freedoms.

Zareena is coming back? Amar Khan leaves Mitti De Baway fans guessing

SHOWBIZ REPORTER

LAHORE



Pakistani actress Amar Khan has sparked speculation about Zareena's possible return to drama Mitti De Baway after sharing an Instagram post hinting that her character may soon reappear on screen.

Taking to Instagram, Amar shared a carousel of pictures with the caption, "Suna hai aj Zareena arahi hai," which translates to "I hear Zareena is coming today." Her playful remark has raised curiosity about whether viewers will see Zareena again in the upcoming episodes.

Alongside the hint about her character, Amar also shared a glimpse of her outfit, mentioning legendary folk singer Mansoor Malangi. She wrote, "Also Mansoor Malangi sb's vocals are in perfect harmony with this Motiye ke phool wali shirt."

The actress appeared to be enjoying the combination of Mansoor Malangi's vocals and her floral shirt featuring jasmine flowers. She also thanked designer Yawar Iqbal for the gift, expressing her love for the outfit.

Amar credited Shahbaz Shazi for the photography, Aali Khan for her makeup and Arshad Khan for her hairstyle.

While the actress has not shared further details about Zareena's return, her latest caption has certainly given fans a reason to look forward to what happens next in Mitti De Baway.

Mehwish Hayat gets nostalgic over Teri Meri Kahaniyaan

SHOWBIZ REPORTER

KARACHI



Pakistani actress Mehwish Hayat has looked back fondly on her experience of playing Sadaf in the anthology film Teri Meri Kahaniyaan, describing the role as one of her favorite acting experiences.

Taking to her Instagram Story, Mehwish reshared a fan-made reel featuring a scene from the film's segment Ek Sau Taeeswan, in which her character Sadaf appears alongside Asad, played by Wahaj Ali.

Sharing her thoughts, the actress wrote, "Seeing this scene again reminded me how much I loved playing Sadaf. Bringing her to life was one of my favorite experiences as an actor."

She also mentioned the segment's title in her caption, writing, "Ek sau taeeswaan" from "Teri meri kahaniyaan." Her message reflected her fond memories of portraying the character and the special experience of bringing Sadaf to life on screen.

The reshared clip features a light-hearted exchange between Sadaf and Asad during their train journey. In the scene, Sadaf tells him, "Has kyun rahe ho? I'm not joking!" The fan edit also includes the caption "Women in love."

Teri Meri Kahaniyaan is a Pakistani anthology film comprising three separate stories. The segment Ek Sau Taeeswan was directed by Nadeem Baig and written by Khalil-ur-Rehman Qamar. Mehwish stars as Sadaf opposite Wahaj Ali, while Zahid Ahmed plays her husband, Afaq.

The story follows Sadaf during an overnight train journey from Nawabshah to Karachi, where she meets Asad, a stranger who tries to get close to her. Through their conversations, Sadaf reveals the difficulties in her marriage and her husband's unfaithfulness.

Despite her personal struggles, Sadaf chooses to remain loyal to her values rather than seek revenge. Her character highlight's themes of self-respect, loyalty and emotional strength.

Pierce Brosnan tells new 007 Pattinson: 'Enjoy the ride'



SHOWBIZ DESK

LONDON

Irish actor Pierce Brosnan, who once played the role of the world's most famous spy, has welcomed Robert Pattinson to the "world of Bond", urging him to "enjoy the ride".

"You are going to be magnificent," Brosnan wrote in a post on Instagram, under a black-and-white picture of Pattinson dressed as secret agent James Bond in a tuxedo and brandishing a hand-gun.

"It has been a joy to watch you create a remarkable body of work and to go from strength to strength," he added.

Brosnan played Bond in four films from 1995 to 2002, including "GoldenEye" and "Tomorrow Never Dies", before handing over to Daniel Craig.

After months of speculation, Amazon MGM Studios on Monday named British actor Pattinson as the seventh performer to step into the coveted 007 role, replacing Craig.

Pattinson became a global pop culture phenomenon with his vampire role in the "Twilight" saga before being cast as Batman. He also starred alongside Brosnan in the 2010 romantic drama "Remember Me". Brosnan signed off his message with "Gra Mor, Pierce" -- Irish for "big love".

Another Bond alum, George Lazenby, who played the agent in the 1969 film "On Her Majesty's Secret Service", said on social media: "Robert, welcome to the most exclusive club in the world."

Hailey Bieber chooses between Selena Gomez, Kylie Jenner, Rihanna's brands

SHOWBIZ DESK

NEW YORK

Hailey Bieber found herself facing an unexpected question about Selena Gomez's Rare Beauty during a public appearance.

The Rhode founder was speaking with Andrew Ross Sorkin at The New York Times DealBook Summit in New York City, November 18, when she was asked which company she would buy. The options included Selena's Rare Beauty, Rihanna's Fenty, Kim Kardashian's Skims, and Kylie Jenner's Kylie Cosmetics.

After briefly considering her answer, the 29-year-old called it a "hard" choice before selecting Kim Kardashian's Skims and moving on to the next question.

The question rekindled years of speculation surrounding Hailey, her husband Justin Bieber, and his former relationship with Selena. Justin and Selena split for good in 2018, the same year he and Hailey reunited and married.



Pakistani track 'Alfaaz' enters Spotify's global Top 50

- Hamza, Zain musical collaboration crosses 89 million streams

SHOWBIZ REPORTER

KARACHI



Pakistani musical collaboration 'Alfaaz', featuring Hamza Malik and Zain Zohaib, has crossed 89 million streams on Spotify, securing the 38th position on the platform's Top 50 Global chart.

Released on July 23, the track has reached more than 16 million listeners worldwide and spent 14 weeks at No. 1 on Spotify's Top 50 Pakistan chart. Its international audience includes listeners in the United States, United Kingdom, Bangladesh, Canada and Australia.

The song continues to gain traction, with streams increasing by more than 70 per cent over the last 28 days compared with the preceding period. It has also been added to user-generated playlists more than 1.7 million times and saved over 3.6 million times on the platform.

Following the release of its vocal and acoustic versions in October, the track entered a new phase on November 12 with 'Alfaaz (Alan Walker Relight)'. The reimagined version brings together the Pakistani artists with Norwegian DJ and producer Alan Walker and British singer-songwriter James Arthur, combining South Asian musical influences with electronic production.

Hamza Malik said the song had travelled further than the artists had imagined, adding that seeing audiences around the world connect with it was an incredible feeling.

The track's appeal lies partly in its blend of soft pop melodies and qawwali influences, bringing elements of traditional South Asian music into a contemporary sound.

Fariha Ayub, Spotify's Editor for Pakistan, said the collaboration had resonated with audiences beyond Pakistan, demonstrating how music rooted in South Asian traditions could connect with listeners across borders.

Zain Zohaib said the response to the song was a significant moment in their musical journey.

The track's global chart position and international collaboration highlight the growing visibility of Pakistani music on international streaming platforms.

Gippy Grewal is bowled over by Fazal and Aena's acting prowess

SHOWBIZ DESK

MUMBAI



Indian actor and singer Gippy Grewal has joined the growing list of admirers of Pakistani drama Miti De Baway, giving its actors Fazal Hussain and Aena Khan a special shoutout for their remarkable performances.

Taking to his Instagram stories, Gippy shared two consecutive posts featuring emotionally intense scenes from the drama, appreciating the acting abilities of both performers.

In his first story, the Indian star shared a picture of Fazal Hussain portraying the younger Bala in an emotionally charged scene. The moment captures Bala's heartbreak as he comes to terms with the fact that Bilo has played with his feelings and does not reciprocate his affection.

Gippy tagged Fazal in the story and accompanied his mention with a fire emoji, while also adding an excellence themed emoji alongside the drama's title, seemingly expressing how impressed he was with the performance. Fazal Hussain later reshared the story on his own Instagram account.

The actor's appreciation did not end there. In his next Instagram story, Gippy shared a picture of Aena Khan as young Bilo and simply captioned it "Performance", once again adding the same excellence themed emoji to acknowledge her acting.

Both actors have received considerable appreciation for this particular storyline, with viewers praising the emotional depth they brought to their respective characters. Their intense performances, especially the scenes exploring Bala's heartbreak and Bilo's complicated feelings, struck a chord with audiences when the episode aired.

Fazal and Aena's portrayal of the younger versions of Bala and Bilo has been one of the talking points among viewers, who have appreciated how naturally the two actors have captured the emotions and complexities of their characters.

PCB Chairman hails Pakistan's Test series win, thanks Sri Lanka for memorable tour

SPORTS REPORTER

ISLAMABAD



Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Chairman Mohsin Naqvi congratulated the Pakistan team on winning the Test series and thanked the Sri Lankan team for a memorable tour.

Naqvi said the tour will be remembered for years to come. "I would like to congratulate the Pakistan team for this Test match series win, but especially I want to thank the Sri Lankan team. It was a very good series with a lot of records," Naqvi said while talking here at a local hotel on Friday.

Naqvi said Pakistan has a special attachment with the Sri Lankan people. "We have a special kind of attachment with the Sri Lankan people. There is no doubt about it that the PCB and the Sri Lankan Cricket Board always work very closely, but we feel like whenever the Sri Lankan team is here, it is like very close family members are here," he said.

"We had very good games, not only in Test matches, but also in the tri-nation series, and we are really looking forward to good cricket in future, especially in the coming years, because we are finalizing the FTP for the next three years. So I am very keen to play more with the Sri Lankan team," he added.

He said Pakistan also has very close coordination and friendship with Cricket Australia, and expressed hope for good cricket in the near future. He revealed that Bangladesh has already proposed a tri-nation series in Bangladesh before the World Cup, which is also being finalized.

Naqvi also congratulated the young Pakistani players and team management. "I want to congratulate all the young boys, all the team members, all the team management for such a good game.



RAWALPINDI: Pakistan's Test cricket team players pose for a photograph with the series trophy after winning the second Test match against Sri Lanka at Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium.

Pakistan Beat Sri Lanka By Eight Wickets In Second Test

● Aamer Jamal and Azan Awais guide the hosts home by eight wickets in Rawalpindi, giving Pakistan their first Test series win of the year

SPORTS REPORTER

RAWALPINDI

Pakistan beat Sri Lanka by eight wickets in the second Test at Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium on Friday. The win gave the home side a 1-0 lead in the two-match series, and that was enough to take the trophy.

This is Pakistan's first Test series win this year. The first Test, played at the same ground, ended in a draw.

Sri Lanka set a small target of 90 runs. Pakistan chased it down in just 13 overs.

Aamer Jamal finished on 34 not out, while Azan Awais stayed unbeaten on 32. Jamal hit the winning boundary off spinner Prabath Jayasuriya to end the match.

Pakistan did lose two early wickets. Opener Tayyab Arif made 13, and Mohammad Taha scored just four. Even so, the chase never looked in danger.

The final day started with Sri Lanka leading by 82 runs. Milan Rathnayaka hit a boundary early on, but the innings ended in the second over. Mohammad Abbas trapped Asitha Fernando lbw for two.

Rathnayaka played a brave knock of 66 not out off 88 balls. He hit 12 fours along the way.

Abbas was the best Pakistan bowler with figures of 3-55. Jamal took 3-67, and Razaullah finished with 2-116.

The pace attack deserves credit for this result. The four fast bowlers used the green-tinged pitch well. They bowled Sri Lanka out for just 98 in the first innings.

Pakistan then replied with 325 and took firm control of the match. Sri Lanka fought back in the second innings, with half-centuries from Rathnayaka, Sonal Dinusha and captain Kusal Mendis. It only saved them from an innings defeat.

This was also Pakistan's first series win in the current World Test Championship cycle. Before this, they drew with South Africa and the West Indies. They also lost 2-0 in Bangladesh and 3-0 in England.

Captain Babar Azam was happy with the result. He said the team is new, with some fresh faces, but the players showed good form. He added that winning brings satisfaction and confidence.

Babar also spoke about the team culture. He said the group wants a positive environment where everyone keeps their fighting spirit, whatever the match situation.

Sri Lanka captain Kusal Mendis said the 98-run first innings hurt his team badly. He admitted that batting and fielding need to improve. He did feel his bowlers did well in patches.

Pakistan began the chase positively, with Azan Awais and Tayyab Arif putting on 18 for the opening wicket. The stand ended when Lahiru Kumara bowled Tayyab for 13, with the batter beaten by movement off the pitch after striking three fours.

Azan was joined by Mohammad Taha, but the latter's stay was brief. Asitha Fernando trapped him lbw for four, and Taha's review failed as the ball was shown to be clipping leg stump. Pakistan were 37-2, but Sri Lanka could not build on the breakthrough.

Aamer was promoted up the order and turned the chase into a brisk finish. He struck 34 not out from 22 balls, hitting five fours and a six, and added an unbroken 53 with Azan for the third wicket.

Aamer attacked from the outset, taking boundaries off Fernando and Kumara before finishing the match with a four off Prabath Jayasuriya. Azan remained unbeaten on 32 from 36 balls, with five fours, as Pakistan reached 90-2 in 13 overs.

Green Shirts Dominate Canada In Commanding Sultan Azlan Shah Cup 2026 Opener, Winning 5-1

MUDASSAR

KARACHI

Pakistan made a strong start in the Sultan Azlan Shah Cup with a 5-1 win over Canada in their round-robin match. The Green Shirts played with confidence and control from the first whistle.

Sufyan Khan was the hero of the day. He scored three goals from penalty corners and led his team to a clear victory.

Sufyan opened the scoring in the 18th minute. His goal gave Pakistan an early lead and settled the nerves of the team.

Muhammad Ammad then made it 2-0 in the 37th minute with a fine field goal. Pakistan looked in full control at that point.



Canada did not give up. In the 45th minute, Karan Robinson scored a field goal and cut the gap to 2-1. For a short time, the match felt open again.

Pakistan answered quickly. Sufyan scored his second penalty corner goal in the 48th minute and brought back the two-goal lead.

Hannan Shahid made it 4-1 in the 52nd minute with a field goal. The Canadian defence had no reply to the quick attack.

One minute later, Sufyan completed his hat-trick in the 53rd minute. That goal sealed the 5-1 win and showed how sharp Pakistan were in front of goal.

After the match, the President of the Pakistan Hockey Federation, Mohyuddin Ahmad Wani, praised the team for its strong show. He said he was happy with the effort from every player.

He also said he hopes the team will keep this form and fighting spirit in the rest of the Sultan Azlan Shah Cup. Fans back home will be hoping for more wins.

This result is a big boost for Pakistan.

Pakistan's 24 Lost WTC Points Expose A Costly Over-Rate Problem

● Slow over-rate penalties have cost Pakistan the value of two Test wins, and the habit could hurt them far more in the next cycle

SPORTS REPORTER

KARACHI

Pakistan's 24 lost WTC points expose a problem that deserves as much attention as the results on the field. The team's recent Test series win over Sri Lanka brought some much-needed hope, but this number is worrying.

In the 2025-27 World Test Championship cycle, Pakistan lost 24 points through slow over-rate penalties. That equals the points from two Test wins.



The losses did not come from one bad day. They came in three different series.

Pakistan lost eight points against Bangladesh in Mirpur in May 2026. They lost 11 more against England at Edgbaston in September. The latest five-point cut came in the first Test against Sri Lanka in Rawalpindi this month.

The effect on the table is clear. Pakistan sit ninth among nine teams with 16 points and a points percentage of 12.12. They have won three Tests, lost seven and drawn one.

Without the penalties, they would have 40 points and a percentage of 30.30. That would put them seventh, ahead of the West Indies and Sri Lanka.

Of course, this would not make Pakistan title contenders. Their chances of reaching the 2027 final are already very low.

Nicholls Unbeaten 175 Rescues New Zealand Against India In Wellington

SPORTS DESK

WELLINGTON



Nicholls unbeaten on 175 was the story of the second day in Wellington on Friday. His calm and gritty innings carried New Zealand to 368 in the first Test against India.

The hosts were bowled out after lunch at the Basin Reserve. Just two days earlier, few people would have guessed they would reach such a total.

New Zealand had been in real trouble early on the first day. They were struggling at 70-5, and India looked firmly in control.

Then Glenn Phillips joined Nicholls at the crease. Together, they put on a stand of 216 runs and turned the match around.

Nicholls resumed on Friday morning on 113, with the team at 243-5. He showed the same patience that gave him his 12th Test century.

He made no mistakes through the morning and reached 150 without giving a chance. In the end, he faced 335 balls and hit 21 fours. His stay at the crease lasted 589 minutes.

Phillips reached his second Test century early in the morning session. His hundred came off 193 balls and included 13 fours.

India's bowlers struggled to find a steady length. They often bowled too full, which gave the batters easy drives. At other times they pitched too short, and the batters simply left the ball alone.

Even Jasprit Bumrah was a little loose at first. He gave away 15 runs in his first two overs.

Akash Deep then bowled a fine delivery to bowl Phillips for 118. That ended a partnership of 63 overs.

After that, New Zealand's last four batters added only 30 runs between them.

Bumrah finished with 4-92 from 29 overs in his return to Test cricket after a year.



PM Congrats National Cricket Team On Test Series Win Over Sri Lanka

● The prime minister praised the players for their hard work, teamwork and a performance that made the whole nation happy

SPORTS REPORTER

ISLAMABAD

PM Shehbaz congrats the national cricket team on winning the Test series against Sri Lanka. He shared his happiness in a statement issued on Friday.

The prime minister praised the players for their outstanding performance. He said their hard work and teamwork were clear in every match of the series. According to him, the team played an excellent game and brought joy to the whole nation. Cricket fans across the country have been celebrating the win.

PM Shehbaz especially mentioned the young players. He said they showed a remarkable level of skill and confidence on the field.

He also expressed hope that the team will keep up this momentum. In his view, the same spirit can lead to more wins in the coming matches.

The prime minister did not forget the visitors. He paid tribute to the Sri Lankan cricket team for playing well and giving a tough fight throughout the series.

He also thanked Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Chairman Mohsin Naqvi and the PCB management. He commended them for their efforts and support behind this success.

The win has lifted the mood of cricket lovers everywhere. Many people believe this young team has a bright future if it keeps working with the same dedication.

Messages of praise for the players continue to come in from fans and officials. The nation now looks forward to the team's next challenge.



Pakistan crowned Asia Cup Blind Cricket Champions

SPORTS REPORTER

DHAKA

Pakistan have been declared champions of the Asia Cup Blind Cricket Tournament after rain disrupted the final, with the title decided on the basis of points and tournament rules.

According to reports, Pakistan finished ahead of India in points, run rate and head-to-head record to claim the trophy.

The tournament rules were shared with all participating teams on November 7, and Pakistan secured the title under the agreed regulations.

Pakistan emerged victorious against India in the final of the 2nd Asia Cup Cricket T20 for the Blind. High Commissioner Mr. Imran Haider congratulated the winning team. Teams from Pakistan, Bangladesh, India and Sri Lanka participated in the tournament. High Commissioner Mr. Imran Haider attended the prize distribution ceremony as the Guest of Honor. The much-awaited final could not be played due to rain and adverse weather conditions. Pakistan was subsequently declared the winner on the basis of points. The High Commissioner appreciated the dedication, resilience and sporting spirit demonstrated by the participating players. Pakistan's triumph in the tournament marks a proud moment for the team and for the promotion of inclusive sports across South Asia.

Pakistan remained unbeaten in the league stage, defeating Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and India to finish at the top of the points table.

Following the final, the Indian team reportedly boycotted the closing ceremony and left the stadium.



ISLAMABAD: November 20 - Wispy clouds light up the evening sky as the sun sets over a road in the Federal Capital.

Community Interests Must Remain Central To Energy Transition

● Swarm Electrification Model Lets Households Share Surplus Solar Electricity Equitably In Pakistan

STAFF REPORTER

ANTALYA

Minister of State for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination Dr Shezra Mansab Ali Khan Kharal has emphasised the need to place communities at the centre of Pakistan's energy transition, saying emerging models of community-based electricity sharing could help make renewable energy more accessible, affordable and equitable.

Addressing an event titled "Advancing Swarm Electrification for Energy Equity, Climate Justice and a Just Energy Transition" at the Pakistan Pavilion during COP31, she said the energy transition should not be viewed in isolation from people's everyday needs.

Organised by the Policy Research Institute for Equitable Development (PRIED), the event examined the potential of Swarm Electrification, a decentralised model that connects existing rooftop solar installations, batteries and inverters to enable households and businesses to share surplus electricity.

Dr Shezra said community-level energy models deserved consideration for their potential to connect local energy needs with broader national and environmental priorities.

"Communities must be protected, their interests recognised, and their participation ensured. The benefits of new energy models should extend beyond infrastructure and investment to the people they



are intended to serve," she said.

The minister stressed the need to examine appropriate policy frameworks, regulatory arrangements, institutional coordination and financial mechanisms to support such initiatives and ensure equitable outcomes.

"Our approach to the energy transition must be practical and balanced. We need solutions that work for people, strengthen national energy systems, support economic development and are environmentally sustainable," she added.

She said countries navigating the challenges of energy security, economic development and climate change needed to explore solutions that could address these priorities simultaneously.

Earlier, PRIED researcher Amina Shahab, presenting a study titled "Swarm Electrification in Pakistan: Unlocking Community-Led Energy Sharing", said the future of the energy transition should focus not only on cleaner electricity production but also on making energy systems more accessible and equitable.

Dr Khalid Waleed, research fellow at the Sustainable Development Policy Institute, said community-driven electricity sharing could transform the power sector and facilitate access to clean energy, although the model could have economic implications for conventional grid utilities.

Buddhist Monastics Offer Recommendations For Pakistan Gandhara Strategy

● Dedicated Buddhist Visa Category Proposed To Boost Pilgrimage Heritage Tourism In Pakistan



STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD

International Buddhist monastics and scholars have offered recommendations for further strengthening Pakistan's Gandhara Strategy, emphasising improved infrastructure, greater community participation and enhanced international cooperation to preserve and promote the country's rich Buddhist heritage.

The recommendations were shared during the concluding session of the four-day Gandhara Strategic Dialogue 2026, held at the Ministry of National Heritage and Culture Division, Islamabad, which concluded on Friday.

The visiting Buddhist delegates stressed that developing Gandhara as a sustainable religious and cultural destination required improved transportation, visitor facilities, meditation halls and better arrangements for Buddhist pilgrims. They emphasised that religious pilgrims had distinct requirements from ordinary tourists, which should be considered in planning infrastructure and pilgrimage-related facilities.

The participants also highlighted the importance of involving local communities in heritage preservation, saying they should not only benefit economically from heritage-related activities but also understand the cultural and spiritual significance of historical sites and take pride in their legacy.

They also suggested exploring ecological restoration of selected Gandhara areas to reflect aspects of their historical natural environment.

Calling for stronger international engagement, the monastics emphasised diplomatic facilitation and closer connections with Buddhist communities, particularly in Laos and Bangladesh. They observed that Pakistan's Gandhara heritage offered significant opportunities to strengthen spiritual and cultural ties across South Asia, East Asia, the Himalayan region and Europe.

Appreciating the Government of Pakistan for hosting the Dialogue, the visiting delegates said the engagement had broadened their understanding of the country.

A monk from Thailand shared that he had dreamed of visiting Pakistan for nearly two decades, adding that his experience had given him a much more positive impression of the country than the limited references in Thai literature and perceptions formed abroad.

Responding to the recommendations, Secretary National Heritage and Culture Division Asad Rehman Gillani said Pakistan was not the owner but the custodian of Gandhara's invaluable heritage, adding that its preservation for future generations was a collective responsibility.

He appreciated the insights shared by international delegates and said Pakistan also had an opportunity to learn from their experience in safeguarding religious relics and sacred heritage.

He assured the participants that their recommendations would be considered in further refining the national Gandhara Strategy.

He said a task force constituted by the Prime Minister aimed to bring all relevant institutions, stakeholders and government departments onto a common platform to coordinate efforts relating to heritage preservation, infrastructure development, education and awareness, pilgrimage facilitation, security and international cooperation.

Coordinator of the Prime Minister's Task Force on Gandhara, Imran Shauket highlighted the need to position Gandhara as a sacred Buddhist pilgrimage and spiritual destination, keeping its religious significance at the centre of future initiatives.

SCP achieves ISO-9000/2015 Certification for quality management, judicial services

STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD



The Supreme Court of Pakistan has achieved ISO 9001:2015 certification for its Quality Management System (QMS), following successful assessment against internationally recognised quality management standards.

The certification, issued by INTERCERT on November 19, marks a significant milestone in the Court's ongoing institutional reforms aimed at improving judicial administration, transparency, accountability, and public service delivery.

The certification covers the provision of judicial services, including final appellate adjudication of civil and criminal matters, rent and family appeals, review of judgments and orders, exercise of contempt jurisdiction, and issuance and enforcement of judicial orders and decrees. Its scope also encompasses associated judicial administration, registry operations, case management, record summoning and management, and publication and archiving of judgments and legal precedents.

To achieve certification, the Supreme Court established a comprehensive Quality Management System, supported by an institutional Quality Policy, standardised procedures, documented workflows and clearly defined responsibilities.

The framework incorporates Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), internal audits, performance monitoring, risk assessment and corrective measures to promote consistency, accountability and continuous improvement across the certified functions.

For litigants, advocates and other court users, the standardisation of procedures is intended to reduce administrative delays, minimise unnecessary visits, improve the accuracy and reliability of information, and ensure more consistent and timely service delivery. Clearly defined processes and responsibilities will also facilitate the efficient handling of applications, case records, judicial orders and other court-related services, making the justice system more accessible, transparent and responsive to public needs.

The certification complements the Supreme Court's wider judicial reforms, including digitisation of case records, e-filing, electronic certified copies, improved case management and public facilitation services. Together, these initiatives seek to simplify procedures, enhance institutional efficiency and facilitate access to justice, particularly for litigants residing in remote areas.

The achievement reinforces the Supreme Court's commitment to internationally recognised quality standards, sustainable institutional performance and continuous improvement, with a focus on strengthening public confidence through efficient, transparent and people-centred judicial services.

PNCA Organises Watercolour En Plein Air Workshop Today

STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD

Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA) organised a Watercolour – En Plein Air Workshop today, conducted by artist and art educator Tayyaba Idrees Qureshi, bringing together over 20 participants for a hands-on creative experience.

The workshop introduced participants to the practice of en plein air painting, an artistic approach that involves creating artworks outdoors while observing and responding directly to one's surroundings.

Through practical demonstrations and guided instruction, participants explored watercolour techniques, experimented with colours and developed their own compositions.

As part of the activity, each participant created a personalised postcard to take home as a memento of the experience, making the workshop an opportunity not only to learn a new artistic skill but also to create something meaningful through their own engagement with art.

HDF Organizes Youth Awareness Session On Tobacco Control

● Youth Learn Graphic Warnings Taxation Policies To Fight Tobacco Use In Islamabad

STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD



Human Development Foundation (HDF) organized an awareness session titled "Empowering Youth for Tobacco Control," bringing together youth volunteers, representatives of educational institutions, government departments and civil society organizations to share information on tobacco control regulations and public health measures in Pakistan.

HDF youth volunteers Hadi Saleemi and Dilzaib Zareen delivered presentations on Graphic Health Warnings (GHWs) on tobacco product packaging and Tobacco Advertising, Promotion and Sponsorship (TAPS), respectively. The presentations highlighted the role of pictorial health warnings and their regular rotation in communicating tobacco-related health risks, while also examining existing restrictions on tobacco advertising and promotion and gaps in the regulatory framework.

The programme also featured presentations by Mr. Zulfiqar Ali Samin, Deputy Secretary Education, Government of Pakistan, on the prohibition of tobacco and nicotine use in educational institutions, and Mr. Tahir Mahmood, Assistant Director, Higher Education Commission (HEC), on the Commission's policy concerning drug and tobacco abuse in higher education institutions. Dr. Khalil Ahmed of the Society for the Protection of the Rights of the Child (SPARC) discussed tobacco taxation and its public health implications.

Mr. Shahid Saleem of HDF presented an overview of global and regional practices relating to GHWs and TAPS, providing participants with a comparative perspective on tobacco control approaches. The session also offered young people an opportunity to interact with representatives of relevant institutions and exchange views on informed youth participation in public health awareness.

In his closing remarks, the Chief Guest, Mr. Azeem Khan Golra, Focal Person, Prime Minister's Youth Programme and Coordinator (Education), highlighted the importance of providing young people with opportunities for skill development, sports and extracurricular activities.

He observed that constructive engagement in such activities could play an important role in promoting healthy lifestyles and reducing young people's vulnerability to tobacco and emerging nicotine products.

The programme concluded with a vote of thanks by Mr. Zulfiqar Ali, Director Programmes, HDF. The session provided a platform for youth learning, technical information-sharing and engagement with institutions working on tobacco control in Pakistan.

PMYP Raises Youth Loan Target To Rs292.5b Now

● Maximum Loan Limit Raised To Rs25 Million For Business Expansion Support Today

NEWS DESK

ISLAMABAD

The Prime Minister's Youth Programme (PMYP) has increased its youth loan target to Rs292.5 billion for the fiscal year 2026-27 and raised the maximum loan limit for business expansion to Rs25 million, as Chairman PMYP Rana Mashhood Ahmad Khan and former Punjab chief minister and MNA Hamza Shehbaz Sharif discussed measures to expand youth employment, education, skills development and economic self-reliance during a meeting in Islamabad on Friday.

During the meeting, Hamza Shehbaz described young people as a valuable national asset, stressing that quality education, modern technical training and equal employment opportunities were essential for Pakistan's progress and economic prosperity.

He appreciated the nationwide initiatives under the PMYP, saying the programme was helping equip young people with contemporary skills and opportunities to earn sustainable livelihoods.

Briefing Hamza Shehbaz on the programme's progress and targets, Rana Mashhood said the increased loan allocation was aimed at supporting young entrepreneurs and facilitating business expansion.

The maximum financing limit for business expansion has been raised to Rs25 million (2.5 crore), he added.

The PMYP chairman also shared details of the Digital Youth Hub, saying more than one million young people and 2,400 local and international companies had registered on the platform to connect talent with employment opportunities.

On education and skills development, he said over 600,000 laptops had so far been distributed among students strictly on merit, while 217,000 young people had received technical training scholarships.

The Skills Development Programme, he added, offered 8,000 courses to enhance employability and equip young people with market-relevant skills.

Highlighting initiatives beyond education and employment, Rana Mashhood said that sports opportunities had been extended to 73,000 young people across the country, while 137 Green Youth Movement clubs had been activated to encourage youth participation in environmental activities

The meeting focused on strengthening opportunities for young people through access to finance, digital employment platforms, modern skills, education and sports, with economic self reliance identified as a key objective of the government's youth-focused initiatives.

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