

Listen attentively, we're ready for you: Zardari warns India; calls for negotiated solutions to Gulf situation

TIMES REPORT

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari on Monday calling the war a last resort, urged India to shift from war theatres to meaningful negotiations— or face another humiliating defeat— and warned that Pakistan had already shown both India and Afghanistan only a fraction of its capabilities.

"Make no mistake. We are ready for you. My message to them is to move away from war theatres to meaningful negotiating tables because that is the only path for regional security... India must listen to us attentively; Pakistan will continue to give its fullest diplomatic and moral support to the just cause of the people of Jammu and Kashmir," the president said in his annual address to the joint sitting of parliament here. Co-chaired by Senate Chairman Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani and National Assembly Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, the session was attended by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and members of the National Assembly and Senate, while in the galleries were First Lady Aseefa Bhutto Zardari, provincial governors and chief ministers, and diplomats. The president, who addressed the parliament for the ninth time at the beginning of the new parliamentary year, deliberated on all national, regional, and international matters, including the Kashmir and Palestine issues, ongoing tension in the Gulf region, Maarka-e-Haq and Ghazab Lil Haq operations, Indian violation of the Indus Waters Treaty, economy, provincial autonomy, and poverty. The president said that nobody in South Asia would be free and safe until Kashmiris

win their freedom from Indian occupation. The president condemned the war waged on Iran and reaffirmed Pakistan's support for its sovereignty and territorial integrity, besides condoling the martyrdom of the Supreme



Leader Ayatollah Khamenei. He also condemned the subsequent attacks launched on the UAE, Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait, Qatar and Saudi Arabia, calling for negotiated solutions to choose peace and restraint and save the region from a deepening crisis.

"The sooner stability returns to the region, the sooner the world can go back to the business of rebuilding lives and fractured trust. I urge the need to exercise maximum restraint, to uphold international law, and to respect the territorial integrity of all brotherly nations," the president said. Coming to Maarka-e-Haq, he said that Pakistan initially showed restraint amid Indian violation of Pakistan's sovereignty, but

later its armed forces acted with outstanding professionalism and discipline, turning India's attack into a landmark strategic victory. Similarly, responding to the attacks by the Afghan Taliban regime on the night of February 26, the armed forces acted decisively. "The political leadership stood united. The people stood resolute," he said, and expressed gratitude to the security forces, including army, air force, navy, Rangers, Frontier Corps, police services and intelligence agencies for both the successful military encounters.

He said that while visiting the families of the martyred soldiers, he felt the same pain as he did at the time of the martyrdom of his wife Shaheed Mohrtama Benazir Bhutto. "This was not just a military victory; it was an expression of our national resolve in crisis... We bravely repulsed India's aggression and emerged victorious, both militarily and diplomatically. Our decisive and principled response was acknowledged by world capitals, beyond a shadow of any doubt."

Responding to the statements by Indian leaders of preparing for another war, he said that, being a lifelong advocate for regional peace, he would not recommend that. "At the same time, I would also say that any aggressor should prepare for another humiliating defeat... Pakistan is a responsible nuclear state... At the same time, we are a state that defends itself decisively when required." Deliberating on the Ghazab Lil Haq operation, President Zardari said that Pakistan had tried every possible form of diplomacy to prevent an outbreak of military responses to terrorist incursions from Afghanistan.

US not veering into a new, endless war, Pentagon says

WEB NEWS/ AFP

VIRGINIA :The Pentagon played down concerns on Monday that the United States' attack on Iran risked plunging the US into a new, open-ended conflict in the Middle East, even



as officials declined to offer a timeline and cautioned they expected more US casualties.

The US and Israel launched their most ambitious attacks on Iran in decades on Saturday, assassinating Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, sinking Iranian warships and hitting more than 1,000 targets so far. In the first Pentagon briefing since the conflict began, US General Dan Caine, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told reporters it would take time to achieve US military objectives in Iran. Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth listed those objectives in primarily military terms, saying the Pentagon sought to destroy Iran's navy and expansive missile capabilities that could shield any covert attempts by Tehran to later build a nuclear weapon. Iran denies it wants nuclear weapons.

"To the media outlets and political left screaming 'endless wars' — stop. This is not Iraq. This is not endless," said Hegseth, a former Fox News host and army veteran who served in Iraq from 2005 to 2006 and deployed to Afghanistan in 2012.

"We're hitting them surgically, overwhelmingly and unapologetically," Hegseth said. Still, Hegseth mocked a reporter who asked about the timeline for the campaign, saying Donald Trump would not be pinned down, even after the US president suggested on Sunday that strikes against Iran could go on for the next four weeks.

US casualties The US and Israeli attacks have triggered a massive Iranian retaliatory response, but many of the most dangerous drones and missiles have been intercepted by US military forces and allies in the region. Still, some of the attacks succeeded in inflicting US losses. The US military said a fourth US service member died on Monday as a result of injuries in the Iran operations.

Six US service members were also injured on Monday when Kuwaiti air defences shot down their three F-15 fighter jets by mistake.

435 Afghan combatants killed, 188 posts destroyed in operation Ghazab lil-Haq: Tarar

TIMES REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar said Monday that Pakistani security forces killed 435 Afghan Taliban combatants and destroyed 188 posts during Operation Ghazab lil-Haq (Righteous Fury), launched in response to "unprovoked action" from across the border.

Sharing a summary of the Afghan Taliban regime's losses at 3:00 pm, Attaullah Tarar said that more than 630 Afghan operatives were injured during Operation Ghazab lil-Haq (Righteous Fury).

The minister stated that 188 tanks and armored vehicles were destroyed during the operation, 31 Afghan posts were captured, and 51 locations across Afghanistan were successfully targeted in air strikes.

Tarar described the operation as a decisive response to aggression, underscoring the scale of losses inflicted on the Afghan Taliban regime.

China calls for ceasing military operations after Iran attack spillover

TIMES REPORT

BEIJING: China has called on all sides to halt military actions and prevent further spread of current conflict in the Middle East, Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said on Monday.

Her comments followed Iran's launch of missiles and drones targeting U.S. military facilities in Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member states and other locations. The strikes were described as retaliation for joint military attacks by the United States and Israel against Iran, which reportedly resulted in the death of Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei on Saturday.

Mao said the U.S. and Israel carried out the strikes without authorization from the UN Security Council, calling the action a violation of international law. She noted that China is deeply concerned about the conflict's spillover effects on neighboring countries and stressed that the sovereignty, security, and territorial integrity of all Gulf states must be respected.

PM Shehbaz expresses grief over Khamenei's martyrdom

TIMES REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has expressed grief over the martyrdom of Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and voiced serious concern over violations of international laws and principles.

In his statement, the prime minister said he is deeply saddened by the martyrdom of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and emphasized that the people and government of Pakistan stand in full solidarity with the Iranian people in their sorrow.

He expressed concern over the breach of international norms, stating that it is an established principle that heads of state and government should not be targeted.

He prayed that Allah grant the Iranian people patience and strength

to endure this irreparable loss.

Meanwhile, due to the martyrdom of Iran's Supreme Leader in the US and Israeli attacks, Prime Minister



Shehbaz Sharif has postponed his visit to Russia.

Sources confirmed that the high-level delegation accompanying the Prime Minister was also scheduled to

travel to Moscow.

Pakistan has informed Moscow that, given the situation following the attacks on Iran, the visit is not feasible at this time.

Additionally, the prime minister has convened a meeting on the current regional security situation. High-ranking military and intelligence officials will participate to discuss security developments in Afghanistan, Iran, and other regional countries, as well as to review Pakistan's policy in the current scenario.

Pakistan will also formulate guidelines in the coming days regarding its stance on the matter.

The meeting under the Prime Minister's chairmanship will decide how Pakistan will be represented at the funeral ceremonies of Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei.

Army called in, three day curfew imposed in Gilgit, Skardu

GILGIT: The Government of Gilgit Baltistan has imposed a three-day curfew in Gilgit and Skardu and sought the deployment of Pakistan Army troops in aid of civil authorities amid a deteriorating law-and-order situation following large-scale protests.

According to an official notification issued by the Home and Prisons Department, the decision was taken in view of the "precarious" security situation in the region in the aftermath of protests triggered by the reported assassination of Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. The notification, addressed to the Force Commander, Force Command Northern Areas (FCNA), stated that there were fears the situation could further deteriorate, particularly in District Gilgit and Skardu.—APP

Operation to be lasted till end of all terror sanctuaries, reaffirms security sources

TIMES REPORT

RAWALPINDI: Afghan Taliban have to choose between Pakistan and Terrorists Groups operating from its soil. Operations in Afghanistan will end when Afghanistan's Taliban Regime provides verifiable assurance of compliance to Pakistan's demand of quitting facilitation of Fitna al Khawarij and Fitna al Hindustan. We are in no hurry.

The duration of Pakistan operations depends on actions on ground by Afghan Taliban Regime. Afghan Taliban Regime is proxy master harbouring multiple terrorist groups to disturb regional peace.

Afghan Taliban Regime is flourishing on war economy in the garb of their perverted religious ideology. Their leaders only

religion is money and nothing else. Ministry of Information and Broadcasting is consistently sharing details on progress of ongoing Operation Ghazab Lil Haq. We are totally transparent about it. Pakistan is targeting sanctuaries of terrorists and their facilitators who are harbouring them. These are legitimate self defence targets of the war of terror imposed upon Pakistani citizens, mosques and children.

Afghan Taliban Regime and their Indian masters are consistently resorting to concocted propaganda and false information through their official accounts.

Please fact check everything. Afg Taliban official accounts have no credibility. Pakistan's operations against terrorists in Afghanistan has received positive response from oppressed Afghan

communities and minorities.

We have no issue with Afghan people; our operations are focused on those perverted Kharjis and their supporters who perpetrate and support acts of terrorism inside Pakistan.

Pakistan has nothing to do with Regime change in Afghanistan, it is prerogative of Afghan people. They are happy that someone has stood to these cruel warlords, we have destroyed more than 180 posts and captured more than 30, those which make tactical sense. All these are those posts from where terrorists were being facilitated as launch pads.

Pakistan is in no hurry to end operation Ghazab Lil Haq. It's time for the terror supporters and abettors to bleed and suffer. Pakistan is not resorting to attacking random targets in Afghanistan,

rather the infrastructure supportive to terrorists groups are specific targets. Pakistan Army's involvement in internal security is due to governance gaps. We are sucked in because of non implementation of NAP in totality and the politicisation of institutions who are primarily responsible for internal security.

That's why we ask all political parties and governments for better governance and NAP implementation. We have no interest in politics and other matters. Situation in Iran Pakistan is pursuing a balanced policy. Iran has also appreciated Pakistan's response alongwith China and Russia. Pakistan has unequivocally expressed its concerns over targeting of brotherly Arab countries by Iran. Pakistan is desirous of a stable and peaceful Iran.

The misperception of Pakistan likely to be the next target is devoid of facts and is highly misplaced. Pakistan can never be equated with Iran as both countries are different militarily, foreign policy / external engagement wise and internal dynamics.

Pakistan pursues a robust foreign policy and values its relations with multiple global stakeholders. We believe in engagement for the sake of stability and prosperity of people of Pakistan. Pakistan's relationship with rest of the world are based on mutual respect and trust.

Pakistan is fully capable of defending its sovereignty and territorial integrity and the same has been displayed during recent events of Marka e Haq and our protracted fight against the scourge of terrorism.

CM directs proactive steps to ensure protection of lives and property of citizens

Meeting reviews prevailing security, counterterrorism measures

TIMES REPORT

PESHAWAR: A high level meeting to review the overall law and order situation in the province was held at the Chief Minister's House in Peshawar under the chairmanship of Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muhammad Sohail Afridi. The meeting undertook a comprehensive review of the prevailing security environment, counterterrorism measures, and arrangements for the protection of citizens' lives and property. The Chief Minister directed all relevant authorities to ensure the protection of the lives and property of the public under all circumstances, emphasizing that any lapse or negligence in this regard would be unacceptable. He instructed that comprehensive and well coordinated security

arrangements be put in place for prayers and religious gatherings during the holy

month of Ramadan. Highlighting the role

of the police in maintaining public safety, the Chief Minister stated that the police

force remains at the forefront of the



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continued and unwavering support to the

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force. He emphasized that all required resources would be provided to the police on a priority basis to further strengthen operational capacity. The Chief Minister further directed the concerned authorities to operate under a clearly defined and results oriented security strategy, ensuring the optimal and efficient utilization of available resources. He stressed that all relevant institutions must remain vigilant and maintain a high state of operational preparedness to respond effectively to any untoward incident. The meeting was attended by Chief Secretary Shahab Ali Shah, Inspector General of Police Zulfiqar Hameed, Additional Chief Secretary Home, Additional Inspector General Counter Terrorism Department, and Additional Inspector General Special Branch.

CityNews

FoP and ZFA launch Ramadan Ration Program for PwDs

TIMES REPORT

PESHAWAR: Friends of Paraplegics (FoP) in collaboration with Zakat Foundation of America (ZFA), has launched the Ramadan Ration Program for deserving persons with disabilities (PwDs) in vari-



ous districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, which is being successfully implemented.

Ration packages were distributed among 100 PwDs of Peshawar, Khyber and Nowshera districts at the Paraplegic Center Peshawar the other day.

This initiative is a manifestation of the commitment of Zakat Foundation of America and Friends of Paraplegics to serve the needy PwDs and provide them with facilities during the holy month of Ramadan.

Sanaullah Khan, Chairman, and Engr Irfanullah, General Secretary, of the organization, while handling over the Ramadan packages to the beneficiaries, appealed to the philanthropists to join hands with them in this noble cause and contribute to the welfare of more individuals with disabilities.

Test held to enroll orphans of Shangla Coal Miners in Khpal Kor Foundation Schools

SYED SAJJID ALI SHAH

SHANGLA: A test for orphan children of coal miners who lost their lives during work in the mines of Shangla was conducted at Government



Centennial Model High School Alpuri under the supervision of Khpal Kor Foundation Swat. The test, held in Alpuri, was attended by 22 children and aimed at granting admission to deserving orphans in the foundation's educational institutions.

Khpal Kor Foundation, based in Swat, is a prominent welfare organization dedicated to the care, education, and upbringing of orphaned children. Its Founder Director, Haji Muhammad Ali, had previously provided support and education to many orphaned children from Shangla after the 2005 earthquake, several of whom have since graduated from reputable institutions and secured respectable jobs.

Recognising that many coal miners from Shangla lose their lives during work, leaving their children without proper support, Haji Muhammad Ali has once again taken this initiative to provide relief to the affected families through education. The people of Shangla have widely appreciated this step, calling it a significant humanitarian effort for the welfare of the region's vulnerable children.

Family members slam police over illegal confinement of relatives

RAUF KHATTAK

KARAK: A serious incident of alleged police misconduct in Tehsil Takht Nasrati has created an uproar, where three young men have reportedly been kept in illegal custody for the past thirty-six hours. The affected family, during an urgent press conference at the Tehsil Press Club, expressed deep concerns over the situation.

Addressing the press conference, the complainant, Lal Sher Khan, a resident of Mughal Banda, Surati Kalla, stated that the police have detained the three young men without any FIR, investigative record, or entry in the daily register.



He said this is not only an abuse of authority but also a blatant violation of human rights.

According to the family, the detainees are not being allowed to contact their relatives, leaving parents and other family members in severe mental distress and uncertainty. Lal Sher Khan alleged that the SHO of the concerned police station is involved in actions beyond the bounds of law and has been unlawfully keeping the youths in custody without justification.

He added that the police's deviation from legal procedures not only violates fundamental civil rights but also severely damages public trust in law enforcement.

The affected family stated that if the youths are accused of anything, the allegations should be presented according to legal procedures. However, such secretive and illegal detention is completely unacceptable. During the press conference, the family urged senior authorities—the District Police Officer Karak, the Regional Police Officer Kohat, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Police, and the provincial government—to immediately take notice of the matter, ensure the release of the young men, and initiate strict legal action against the responsible police officials after a transparent inquiry.

DC inspects markets to ensure price control in Ramadan

TIMES REPORT

PESHAWAR: During the holy month of Ramadan, Deputy Commissioner Peshawar, Captain (R) Sanaullah Khan, conducted a detailed visit to various markets in the city on Monday to ensure the availability of food items at officially notified prices and to prevent profiteering.

During the visit, the Deputy Commissioner interacted with citizens in the markets and inquired about the availability, quality, and official pricing of essential food items. Citizens expressed satisfaction over the measures taken by the district administration during Ramadan. Additional Assistant Commissioner Azeemullah Mehsud was also present on the occasion.

Speaking on the occasion, Captain (R) Sanaullah Khan stated that providing maximum relief to the public during Ramadan is the top priority of the district administration. He added that on a daily basis, early in the morning, officials from the district administration and other relevant departments visit

fruit and vegetable markets to monitor the auction process and issue official price lists accordingly.

He further said that after the

creating artificial inflation. The Deputy Commissioner clarified that all shopkeepers have been directed to prominently display the official price lists. The quali-

relevant departments are performing duties under the supervision of the district administration. Immediate legal action is taken in cases of overcharging.



ty and quantity of essential items are also being regularly inspected to ensure the provision of affordable and quality goods to citizens. Additionally, price monitoring desks have been established in various markets of Peshawar, where officers from

The district administration has urged the public to report any instances of profiteering or absence of official price lists to the concerned authorities so that timely legal action can be taken against those responsible.

DC orders efficient public service delivery

OUR CORRESPONDENT

KOHAT: Deputy Commissioner Kohat, Muhammad Nawaz Wazir, on Monday directed all the departments to take effective measures to further improve the public service delivery, stressing timely, transparent and sustainable solutions to citizens' problems.

Chairing a key meeting under the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister's District Service Delivery Initiative, the deputy commissioner reviewed the ongoing welfare projects and the provision of basic facilities across the district. Officials of the administration, line departments and other relevant agencies attended the meeting.

Wazir directed the departments to ensure that essential services reach citizens at their doorstep, adding that the initia-

tive reflects the provincial government's commitment to effective governance and improved public

directed the officials to submit regular progress reports on all schemes.



service mechanisms at the district level.

DC called for enhanced coordination and a unified strategy among the departments to ensure the timely completion of development and welfare projects, and

The deputy commissioner warned that any negligence or delay in addressing public complaints would not be tolerated, vowing strict monitoring to strengthen the service delivery system across Kohat.

Four hurt in mortar shells strikes in Landi Kotal

AHMAD NABI

KHYBER: Including a minor girl four got injured when two mortar shells, fired from across the border landed in Sdu Khel village of Landi Kotal on Monday evening, police and local sources told. They said that the wounded persons were shifted to headquarter hospital, Landi Kotal for medical aid. It's to be stated here that Afghan regime targeted civilians in Loy-Shelman and Bazaar Zakha Khel, luckily no casualty was reported. The indiscriminate shelling of Afghan forces created panic among the residents of area, locals told.

ISO demo against brutal killing of Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei

TIMES REPORT

PESHAWAR: A joint protest demonstration was held in front of the Peshawar Press Club against the brutal assassination of Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Sayed Ali Khamenei, allegedly carried out by Israel and the United States. The protest call was jointly given by scholars and the Imamia Students Organization (ISO), with large participation from elders and youth from Kohat and Tirah, as well as scholars from the Ahl-e-Sunnat community. The protest was led by

Allama Abid Hussain Shakeri, Allama Syed Jamil Hassan Shirazi, Allama Syed Zafar Naqvi, Allama Nazir Hussain Mutahhari, Allama Syed Arshad Naqvi, Allama Syed Taqi Zaidi, Allama Yawar Abbas Khalili, Allama Muhammad Shoab, and others. Protesters chanted slogans against America and Israel. Speakers at the event stated that the assassination of Ayatollah Khamenei was state terrorism and that America and Israel are the founders of terrorism worldwide. They said Ayatollah

Seyyed Ali Khamenei was a powerful wall against Greater Israel and was removed from the path through a deep conspiracy. They added that people around the world and oppressed nations stand with Iran and will not bow down to Zionist power, even if it means making more sacrifices. The speakers emphasized that they will not hesitate to make any sacrifice to thwart Zionist evil intentions and will immediately follow any course of action decided by their central leadership.

Afra Aftab and Yamni Aftab observed first fast

TIMES REPORT

PESHAWAR: In the blessed month of Ramadan, young sisters Afra Aftab and Yamni Aftab observed their first fast yesterday. Both girls completed the fast with enthusiasm and joy, and their family congratulated and encouraged them on this achievement.

A joyful atmosphere was witnessed at home during Iftar, where the girls' spirit and dedication were highly appreciated.



Hamza Foundation treating dozens daily amid rising Thalassemia cases

TIMES REPORT

PESHAWAR: The number of thalassemia and hemophilia patients registered at Hamza Foundation Welfare Thalassemia Hospital has increased to 1,563 after new cases were reported, highlighting the growing burden on the institution.

According to the foundation, the number of registered patients was 1,560 just a few days ago, but additional cases have recently come to light. Despite limited resources, the hospital continues to provide free medical facilities to around 50 to 60 patients daily, even during the holy month of Ramadan.

Founder of the organization, Ijaz Ali Khan, said that many innocent children suffering from thalassemia and their

families depend on the foundation for donated blood and costly medicines. Patients from far-



flung districts also visit the hospital, where they receive treatment and safe blood transfusions through modern medical equipment.

However, he noted that the institution is currently facing serious challenges due to a shortage of blood donations and financial constraints, particularly during Ramadan.

Ijaz Ali Khan appealed to people from all walks of life, including government authorities and philanthropists, to support the foundation through zakat and charitable donations in order to help save the lives of affected children.

He also stressed that preventive measures are essential to control thalassemia, urging the public to adopt pre-marital screening tests and awareness about cousin marriages, so that more families can be protected from the lifelong burden of the disease.

End Road Closures to Protect Citizens: Zafar Yousafzai, urges to PHC

TIMES REPORT

PESHAWAR: Chairman of the All Pakistan Secretariat Coordination Council, Zafar Khan Yousafzai, has strongly appealed to the Chief Justice of the Peshawar High Court and the Chief Secretary of the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to ensure public convenience and the protection of citizens' lives and property by not allowing any individual or group to block main roads and highways.

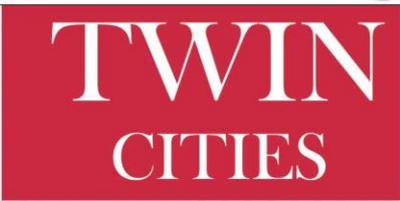
He stated that while protest is a constitutional and democratic right of every citizen, the closure of major roads and key highways is unacceptable under any circumstances. Such actions severely affect ordinary citizens, patients, students, elderly individuals, and those traveling for their livelihoods.

Sharing a personal experience, Zafar Khan Yousafzai said that in 2011, when his mother was critically ill, the roads were also blocked, causing immense mental stress and hardship. He emphasized that such suffering is unbearable for any citizen, and it is the state's responsibility to ensure the protection of fundamental rights.

He demanded that the administration immediately designate specific locations for protests so that daily life is not disrupted and no sick or needy person has to endure unnecessary difficulties.

He expressed hope that the honorable court and the Chief Secretary would prioritize public interest and take prompt and effective measures to prevent citizens from being held hostage through road blockades in the future.

DPM, EU High Representative discuss regional developments



Crackdown Against Afghan Nationals Intensifies in KP

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa police have intensified action against Afghan nationals across the province, particularly in Peshawar, amid renewed tensions between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

According to sources, raids on rented houses, shops and markets have become routine, with police and other law enforcement agencies detaining Afghan nationals and shifting them to police stations for further processing and deportation. The crackdown reportedly gathered pace following recent armed clashes between security forces of the two countries and the temporary closure of border crossings, including Torkham.

Video messages circulating on social media purportedly show instructions to police officials to tighten enforcement measures. It is being claimed that police stations have been assigned daily targets for detentions, though officials have not publicly confirmed such directives.

Members of the Afghan community say fear of arrest has confined many families to their homes. Some allege that adults and teenagers are being detained, and in certain cases women have also been taken into custody. There are complaints that detainees face difficulties contacting relatives and arranging basic necessities.

Observers note that many Afghan nationals have lived in Pakistan for decades, running small businesses and maintaining close social ties with local communities. Critics of the ongoing operation argue that while repatriation may be a state policy decision, it should be carried out in a humane and orderly manner, allowing families reasonable time to settle affairs.

They also stress the need to ensure compliance with international norms relating to migration and asylum, and to avoid creating hardship during the holy month of Ramadan.

Officials maintain that measures are being taken in accordance with government directives and security considerations. The situation remains fluid as authorities continue enforcement actions across the province.

Asma Butt Urges Crackdown on Ramadan Profiteers

TIMES REPORT

RAWALPINDI: Ms. Asma Butt, Chief Executive of Dolphin Communication, expressed serious concern over the inflated prices of essential commodities during Ramadan and urged authorities to take immediate action against profiteers while ensuring relief for deserving segments of society. She stated that although Ramadan is a month of blessings, some elements exploit the situation by raising food prices, which is condemnable. Highlighting the burden of inflation on poor and lower middle-class families, she called on the government to announce special relief packages and subsidies.



She also demanded daily monitoring of markets by price control magistrates to ensure items are sold at official rates, stressing that strict supervision and prompt fines are necessary to curb profiteering. Ms. Butt added that providing public relief during Ramadan is the government's foremost responsibility so citizens can observe the holy month with peace and dignity.

SC Shariat Appellate Bench issues notices in appeals against verdict on quota system

BY:APP

ISLAMABAD: The Shariat Appellate Bench of the Supreme Court of Pakistan on Monday heard appeals filed against the Federal Shariat Court's judgment declaring the quota system in public employment un-Islamic, issued notices to the parties, and adjourned further hearing until the first week of April.

A five-member bench headed by Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail observed during the proceedings that the matter was of fundamental importance and would have far-reaching implications.

During the hearing, Justice Mandokhail asked the Additional Attorney General whether the quota system was in conformity with the principles of Islam. The court directed him to clearly explain its Shariah status.



The Additional Attorney General submitted that Article 27 of the Constitution explicitly provides for the quota system and that Parliament has the authority to legislate on the matter. He informed the court that the system is being implemented in accordance with the population ratio of the provinces. Justice Mandokhail remarked that the 40-year period of the quota system had already expired, to which the Additional Attorney General responded that legislation had been enacted to extend its duration.

Justice Irfan Saadat also observed that the quota system exists on the basis of population ratio, and the government counsel confirmed that it is being implemented according to the population of the provinces. At one point, Justice Mandokhail remarked whether the government intended to convey a message that provinces with smaller populations should increase their population.

More than 300 students completed specialized training under NAVTTC

TIMES REPORT

ISLAMABAD: More than 300 students completed specialized training under the Prime Minister's Overseas Employment Programme of the National Vocational & Technical Training Commission (NAVTTC), with a visa issuance ceremony held in Islamabad on Monday.

Addressing the ceremony as chief guest, Chairman Prime Minister's Youth Programme, Rana Mashhood Ahmed Khan, called on overseas employment promoters to actively support the programme and work closely with the government to expand overseas job opportunities for Pakistani youth.

Calling the trainees as ambassadors of the country, he said their performance abroad would boost confidence among Pakistani manpower and play a key role to promote Pakistan's positive image globally.

"With discipline, skill and professionalism, you will not only secure your own future



but also brighten Pakistan's name," he said.

Addressing the gathering, Executive Director NAVTTC, Aamir Jan said the programme aimed on securing job placement of Pakistani youth in international market with handsome wages through specialized overseas focused training initiative.

This is the second batch being sent abroad, comprising

more than 300 skilled individuals while future programmes would be even more refined and aligned with market demand, he added. He also highlighted the challenges faced by Pakistani labour abroad, noting that overseas workers continue to serve as a backbone of the national economy through remittances.

In her address, Chairperson NAVTTC, Gulmina Bilal said NAVTTC had undergone a fundamental transformation in recent years. "There was a time when NAVTTC's role was limited to regulation and training alone. That era is over," she said, adding that the true measure of success now lay in whether training translated into employment.

She emphasized that NAVTTC's core mandate was to produce skilled, 'plug-and-play' youth who could be immediately placed against international job demand.

PRCS KP Briefs Chinese Embassy on Humanitarian Challenges

TIMES REPORT

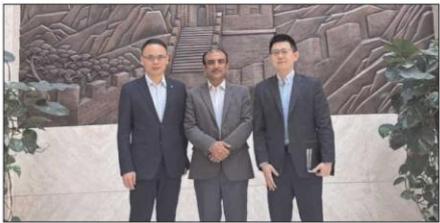
PESHAWAR: The PRCS Provincial Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Abid Rehman

adjoining districts, and the people of the recent flood-affected districts including Buner, Chitral, Shangla and Swat are currently facing severe difficul-

ties. Further said that in the light of the clear instructions of the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Mr. Faisal Karim Kundi, the Pakistan Red Crescent Society Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Branch has made sustainability the central pillar of its strategy. In this context, the provincial secretary also shared a comprehensive and actionable sustainability plan with the delegation of the Chinese Embassy, which aims to promote long-term development initiatives based on humanitarian compassion.

The meeting concluded in a cordial atmosphere and the parties agreed to further strengthen mutual cooperation and take joint measures for the welfare of the affected communities. This development can prove to be the beginning of a new chapter of humanitarian service, stability and development in the province.

The meeting ended in a cordial atmosphere and the parties agreed to further strengthen mutual cooperation and take joint measures for the welfare of the affected communities.



Marwat, held an important meeting with senior officials of the Embassy of China in Islamabad. During the meeting, he gave a detailed briefing on the ground realities and serious challenges facing by the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

He told the officials that the people displaced due to the tension in the Pak-Afghan border situation, the increasing burden of families displaced due to unrest in the Tirah Valley and

ties. These situations have badly affected the lives of an ordinary citizen, who is waiting for assistance for basic needs like food, health and economic rehabilitation. The Provincial Secretary emphasized that providing immediate relief to the affected population as well as providing economic stability on a sustainable basis is the need of the hour, so that they can stand on their own feet with dignity.

Mr. Abid Rehman Marwat

DPO inspects FC Fort in remote mountainous region

RAUF KHATTAK

KARAK: District Police Officer (DPO) Imran Khan paid a detailed visit to the FC fort located in the remote and mountainous area of Darga Shaheedan in Karak.

During the visit, he met FC Jawano personnel, discussed the current security situation, and praised their high morale, professional skills, and patriotic spirit despite difficult working conditions.

A search-and-clearance operation was carried out by police teams around the Darga Shaheedan fort. Modern surveillance tools were deployed, including a drone copter, to monitor

mountain ranges and sensitive surrounding points. Officials said the aerial monitoring aimed to maintain strict vigilance over any suspicious movement in the area.

Visits to Checkposts and Border Areas

the fort inspection, the DPO visited Bahadur Khel Checkpost, Changuush Checkpost, and Lachi Police Station. He also inspected the boundary area connecting Bannu, reviewing security arrangements, manpower presence, and operational readiness.

He instructed officers to remain fully alert and ensure strong coordination, especially in border-adjacent

zones. Iftar Arranged for Police Personnel

During his visits, DPO Imran Khan also arranged an Iftar gathering for police personnel stationed at the fort, checkposts, and police stations. He listened to the challenges faced by officers performing duties in tough and remote areas and directed officials to ensure the timely provision of all necessary facilities.

Reaffirming his commitment, the DPO stated that all available resources would be utilized to maintain law and order in the district and to strengthen surveillance across border regions.

CDA plans citywide cleanliness drive, 24/7 control room

ISLAMABAD: The Capital Development Authority (CDA) on Monday unveiled a comprehensive plan to improve sanitation services in the Federal Capital, including the launch of a citywide cleanliness campaign, the introduction of a three-bin waste segregation system in commercial centres and establishment of a round-the-clock monitoring control room.

The decisions were taken at a meeting held at CDA headquarters, chaired by CDA Chairman and Chief Commissioner Muhammad Ali Randhawa. Senior officials, including board members and heads of relevant formations, attended the meeting to review the existing sanitation arrangements and devise a strategy for improving the solid waste management system.—APP

Humayun lauds Hindu community for backing President's call for unity, simplicity on Holi

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Secretary General of Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Muhammad Humayun Khan has expressed heartfelt gratitude to the Hindu community across the country for supporting President Asif Ali Zardari's appeal to observe Holi with simplicity and in the spirit of national unity.

In a statement issued here, Humayun Khan said that by wholeheartedly endorsing the President's call, the Hindu community has demonstrated patriotism, responsibility and a strong sense of national consciousness.

He said that the gesture reflects a collective commitment to prioritizing national identity, peace and stability above all else.

Humayun Khan noted that, in

view of the prevailing security situation and circumstances along the western border, it is prudent to limit large public gatherings and large-scale celebrations to ensure national security and maintain law and order. He emphasized that taking precautionary measures and complying with directives issued by local authorities is a shared responsibility of all citizens.

Humayun Khan reaffirmed that Pakistan takes pride in its religious and cultural diversity, where followers of all faiths enjoy complete freedom to celebrate their religious festivals. However, he added that in light of current challenges, promoting national harmony, responsibility and unity is the need of the hour.

Paying tribute to the Hindu community, he extended advance greetings on the occasion of Holi and expressed hope that the festival of colors would be celebrated with simplicity, moderation and mutual respect in keeping with the spirit of national unity.

Maroof to Launch New Hospital in DHA Rawalpindi

TIMES REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Maroof International Hospital hosted its Annual Iftar Dinner at Serena Hotel Islamabad, bringing together consultants, managers, staff members, and their families for an evening of reflection, gratitude, and fellowship. The event provided an opportunity for colleagues and their families to connect beyond the workplace, strengthening bonds and celebrating the growing "Maroof Family."

Chairman Ch. Naseer Ahmad delivered a keynote address, stating, "Maroof is not built by bricks and walls alone — it is built by hearts that serve, hands that heal, and families that stand together. Every year, our family grows stronger."



along with our resolve to serve humanity with compassion and excellence."

A key highlight of the evening was the announcement of a new Maroof International Hospital in DHA Phase II, Rawalpindi. Ch. Naseer Choudhry said the new facility will provide high-quality medical services to residents of Rawalpindi and surrounding areas, expanding the hospital's commitment to accessible and compassionate healthcare beyond the federal capital.

CEO Haroon Naseer reaffirmed the hospital's core values of compassion, unity, and social responsibility. He stated, "We remain mindful of the recent challenges faced by communities and extend our support to those affected. As a healthcare institution, we are committed to the well-being and care of all."

The Iftar dinner concluded with a sense of pride, gratitude, and optimism. The event underscored that Maroof International Hospital is not just a healthcare provider but a growing institution dedicated to service, community welfare, and regional harmony.

EWAWG Alliance concerned over escalating violence in Iran

TIMES REPORT

PESHAWAR: The Ending Violence Against Women and Girls Alliance, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (EWAWG Alliance KP), expressed deep concern over the recent military strikes involving the United States and Israel in Iran, which have reportedly resulted in civilian casualties, including women and children.

Any escalation of armed conflict that endangers civilian populations raises serious concerns under international humanitarian law and the principles of the United Nations Charter. The protection of civilians, particularly women and girls who disproportionately suffer during conflict, must remain a central priority in all military and political decisions.

Violence and instability in the region not only threaten immediate lives but also create long-term risks for women and girls, including displacement, loss of livelihoods, reduced access to health services, and increased vulnerability to gender-based violence.

EWAWG Alliance KP stands in solidarity with affected communities and with peace advocates across the world who are calling for restraint, accountability, and urgent diplomatic efforts to prevent further escalation.

We urge the international community to prioritize de-escalation, ensure independent assessment of civilian harm, facilitate humanitarian access, and uphold the fundamental principles of human rights and civilian protection.

EWAWG Alliance KP reaffirms its commitment to justice, peace, and the protection of women and girls in all contexts of violence and conflict.

Unidentified drone crashes in ghalanai, no casualty

TIMES REPORT

PESHAWAR: An unidentified drone crashed in the central area of Ghalanai, district Mohmand, on Monday, however fortunately no casualties were reported in the incident.

According to local police, the drone, which reportedly approached from an unknown direction, struck the building of Governor Model High School located inside the Ghalanai Headquarters compound near the residence of the Deputy Commissioner Mohmand. The drone fell through a ventilation opening into a classroom, while some of its debris was scattered in the school corridor.

At the time of the incident, teachers and staff were present on the premises but remained unharmed.

Security officials stated that the area has been cordoned off and evidence is being collected to determine the nature and origin of the drone. Technical teams are conducting a forensic examination of the wreckage. According to security sources, it is still unclear where the drone came from. However, due to the sensitivity of the incident, surveillance and investigation efforts have been intensified.

The local administration has also tightened security at the school and nearby government installations. Authorities have stated that the current incident is being viewed within this broader security context, though final conclusions will only be drawn after the completion of investigations.

Editorial & Opinion

The Voice of the Time
DAILY TIMES

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Human smuggling solution

The recent announcement that Pakistan, Italy, Spain and Greece have reached a consensus to establish legal migration pathways while jointly combating human smuggling marks a new beginning after several years of failed attempts to curb illegal migration operations. These operations take advantage of the desperation of economically-deprived Pakistanis or oppressed minorities who are seeking a better life in affluent countries, especially in Europe.

While there is still much work to be done before formal agreements can be signed, there have already been some breakthroughs on smaller levels, including recent deals with Italy for 10,500 work visas for Pakistani workers in sectors including shipbreaking, hospitality, healthcare and agriculture. Many of these sectors are already popular among illegal migrants from Pakistan, so the visa deal is essentially a way to formalise workforce participation and bring them out of the dark.

Work visa agreements benefit all parties, since they help host countries address under-the-table employment and the use of grey channels. At the same time, Pakistan's oversupply of less educated youngsters would find many opportunities in physical, labour-intensive professions, which are generally unpopular among local citizens in most wealthy countries. And because work visas would give workers legal status, they would also be more likely to use formal banking channels, especially for remitting money.

Pakistan's recent efforts to reduce illegal migration have already been bearing fruit — the European states reportedly said there has been a 47% reduction in illegal migration cases, and the availability of a legal option will obviously deliver another blow to traffickers. The new understanding between Pakistan and the three European countries is proof that migration issues can have win-win solutions reachable through diplomatic means, as long as the parties approach talks earnestly. Aside from legal migration pathways, additional support to crack down on human traffickers will also help clear up the situation on the ground here and encourage more people to choose safe and legal channels.

A Region in Turmoil, Pakistan Weighs Its Options



JUNAID QAISER

The region is once again facing a wave of uncertainty after the assassination of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. The fallout from this shocking escalation isn't just staying in Iran; it's sending ripples across the region and even further afield. In Pakistan, these shockwaves are being felt both politically and on the streets. Protests broke out in several cities following the news, with violence resulting in at least ten deaths in Karachi and two more in Islamabad. These heartbreaking events highlight just how closely developments in the neighboring country resonate within Pakistan.

Recognizing the volatility of the situation, Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi appealed to citizens to remain calm and avoid actions that could

worsen internal stability. At the same time, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif convened a high-level meeting to assess both the regional crisis and Pakistan's internal security situation. The meeting brought together senior political and military leadership, including Chief of Defence Forces Asim Munir, highlighting the seriousness with which Islamabad is viewing the unfolding developments.

Pakistan's leadership is confronting a rapidly evolving regional landscape. On one side, tensions between U.S. and Iran have escalated dramatically following the strikes and Tehran's retaliatory missile attacks targeting Israel and several countries hosting U.S. bases in the Gulf. On another front, Pakistan itself has been dealing with cross-border security challenges from Afghanistan, where militant activity has increasingly spilled across the border. Islamabad's launch of Operation Chabab III-Haq against the Afghan Taliban earlier this week reflects the seriousness of these threats.

Amid these pressures, the government has also been focused on protecting Pakistani citizens abroad. Officials briefed the prime minister on efforts to evacuate Pakistani nationals from Iran, with arrangements being made through Azerbaijan to ensure their safe return. Such measures demonstrate that beyond the geopolitical calculations, the immediate priority remains

the safety of Pakistanis caught in the midst of the crisis.

The seriousness of the situation was underscored by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's decision to put his planned visit to Russia on hold. This was anticipated to enhance bilateral relations, but with the regional dynamics shifting so rapidly, it's essential for leaders to concentrate on pressing strategic and security matters. For Pakistan, the chaos in the Middle East isn't just a distant geopolitical issue. The Gulf region is intricately linked to Pakistan's economic well-being and diplomatic interests. Millions of Pakistanis reside and work in Gulf nations, and their remittances play a crucial role in the national economy. The importance of trade partnerships, energy collaboration, and investment in Afghanistan, particularly emphasizes how critical stability in this area is. This is why Islamabad's response has been more measured than impulsive. Pakistan has voiced its concerns about the rising tensions while stressing the importance of restraint and diplomacy. The country has also firmly condemned any attacks that jeopardize the sovereignty and security of Gulf nations. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's outreach to leaders in the Gulf showcases Pakistan's unwavering commitment to its Islamic allies and to fostering regional stability. On the global stage, including at the United Nations, Pakistan has consistently

pushed for dialogue instead of conflict. This approach reflects a core tenet of Pakistan's foreign policy: protecting national interests while standing in solidarity with the Muslim community. While diplomacy is crucial, it can't overlook the strategic realities unfolding in Iran. Wars have a way of reshaping political landscapes, and the current conflict has already ignited discussions about possible internal instability or changes in leadership in Tehran. If such shifts happen, Pakistan will need to engage constructively with whatever new leadership arises in Iran. Geography makes this engagement necessary. With a long border and a closely linked regional environment, cooperation is vital for Pakistan and Iran, whether it's about strategic security, trade, or overall regional stability. Governments may come and go, but geography is a constant. In times of crisis, nations often feel the urge to react emotionally. However, Pakistan must resist that temptation. The guiding principle should be clear: prioritize national interest while also showing responsible solidarity with fellow Muslim nations. Even though the region is in turmoil, Pakistan must stay the course. A steady approach, grounded in prudence, diplomacy, and strategic patience, will be essential as Islamabad navigates one of the most uncertain periods in the recent history of the Middle East.

Pakistan-Afghanistan Tensions



MUSAWAR QURESHI

The rising tensions between Pakistan and Afghanistan have multiple causes. One of the major factors is the activities of Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), which is allegedly supported by the Afghan Taliban. The TTP has been involved in terrorist attacks inside Pakistan and is accused of using Afghan territory as a base for its oper-

ation. India may benefit from the strained relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan, as it could create opportunities for New Delhi to expand its influence in Afghanistan. Groups such as TTP, ISIS-K (Islamic State Khorasan Province), and Al-Qaeda could exploit the instability to intensify their activities. The people living along the border regions on both sides are the most affected. Their livelihoods, security, and daily lives have been severely disrupted. Tensions have negatively impacted Pakistan's economy, particularly in trade and transit sectors.

Afghanistan's fragile economy is also suffering from disruptions in trade with Pakistan and the pressure created by the return of Afghan refugees. Both countries should engage in direct talks to address their concerns and seek mutually acceptable solutions. Pakistan and Afghanistan must cooperate against militant groups and ensure that neither country's territory is used

against the other. A formal border understanding could help resolve long-standing disputes and reduce cross-border friction. Expanding trade and economic partnerships could create shared interests that promote stability. Both countries should seek constructive international support in counter-terrorism efforts. China can play a significant role in reducing tensions between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Beijing has already made substantial investments in the region and maintains close relations with both countries. It could use its influence to encourage dialogue and regional stability. China could help mediate discussions and support confidence-building measures. Increased investment in Afghanistan, possibly in coordination with Pakistan, could promote economic stability. China could enhance security cooperation with both countries against militant groups.

Beijing could assist in building broader international backing for regional peace efforts, racking its

economic investments. Ensuring regional security and border stability. Strengthening its global diplomatic standing. While precise figures are difficult to verify, it is widely reported that since 2006, terrorism-related violence has claimed the lives of approximately 60,000 Pakistanis. Thousands more have been displaced as internally displaced persons (IDPs). In the last quarter of 2025 alone, reports indicate that 70 civilians were killed and 478 injured in Afghanistan due to various attacks. Additionally, recent cross-border strikes reportedly resulted in further civilian casualties.

The ongoing tensions between Pakistan and Afghanistan threaten regional stability and primarily harm ordinary citizens. Sustainable peace can only be achieved through dialogue, mutual trust, coordinated counter-terrorism efforts, and economic cooperation. Regional stakeholders, particularly China, can contribute positively to creating an environment conducive to lasting peace.

Electricity Bills Ready to Strike Public Pockets After Gas



AMJAD HADI YOUSAFZAI

Pakistan's energy crisis is no longer just a matter of statistics; it has become the story of every household. During winter, gas bills shook the public to its core, and now in summer, a new wave of electricity bills has made it clear that in this system, everything seems protected except the common citizen. According to the financial year 2024-25 report of the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority, electricity distribution companies caused a loss of 47 billion rupees to the national econ-

omy in a single year. The largest share of these losses—\$7.48 billion rupees—was recorded by the Peshawar Electric Supply Company. The question is: who caused this loss, and who is paying the price? The answer is clear—inefficiency at the top, payment at the bottom. Line losses, electricity theft, a faulty billing system, and weak recovery mechanisms are among the reasons cited in the official report. However, instead of addressing these flaws, the weapon of fixed charges has been deployed. By significantly increasing electricity prices under the head of fixed charges, nearly 50 billion rupees in additional burden has been directly placed on the public. Now, whether you use less electricity or more, payment according to the approved load is mandatory. From protected consumers to those using up to 700 units, everyone is affected. Domestic users with single-phase and three-phase meters are also caught in this tightening grip.

Citizens of Peshawar, in particular, are facing double punishment. While the Peshawar Electric Supply Company recorded the highest losses, there has been no clear example of accountability for its management. A loss exceeding \$7 billion rupees is not the result of a single mistake but a sign of persistent mismanagement. Yet instead of reforms, tariffs have been increased.

On the other hand, IPPs (Independent Power Producers) continue to operate on their own terms. No clear outcome has emerged from the government's efforts at effective and transparent negotiations with them. On one side, IPPs appear to enjoy free rein; on the other, the entire burden is being shifted to consumers. What kind of strategy is this—one lacking both transparency and consideration for public interest?

When electricity became expensive, citizens were encouraged to adopt solar energy. People took loans and invested their savings to install solar systems. The solar business grew rapidly across the country. But as soon as this sector began expanding and certain interests sensed profits, the sword of taxation was hung over it. This is not policy continuity; it is open contradiction. First a path was shown, then that very path was made costly.

The influence of mafias over several national institutions is no secret. The public is receiving no relief at any level. The economy is already under pressure, businesses are shutting down, unemployment is rising, and amid all this, the storm of electricity prices, gas costs, and inflation shows no sign of subsiding.

If the 472 billion rupee loss resulted from the incompetence of these companies, accountability should take place there.

If 200 billion rupees in fixed charges are being collected, transparent justification is essential. IPP contracts should be renegotiated on transparent grounds, taxes imposed on solar energy should be reviewed immediately, and emergency measures should be taken to reduce electricity and gas prices so that real relief can reach the public. The public is not just paying bills anymore—they are watching everything. And when economic pressure crosses its limits, its echo does not remain confined to homes; it reaches the halls of power as well.

Initiatives such as the Digital Compliance Gateway reflect a growing recognition that reform must be practical, consultative, and technology-enabled. By bringing together government stakeholders, business communities, policy experts, and development institutions, such platforms help bridge the gap between policy design and operational reality.

If sustained and translated into actionable policy measures, this emerging narrative of simplification, coordination, and digital transformation can contribute to building a more conducive business environment. With collective commitment and collaborative action, Pakistan can move toward a regulatory system that supports enterprise rather than constrains it—unlocking economic potential and laying the foundation for inclusive and sustainable growth.

Unlocking Pakistan's Business Potential



SHAFQAT AZIZ

Pakistan's economic growth and job creation prospects are closely linked to the strength and vitality of its private sector. Small and medium enterprises (SMEs), traders, and emerging entrepreneurs form the backbone of the country's economy, contributing significantly to employment and local economic activity. Yet, despite their importance, businesses across Pakistan continue to operate within a complex and fragmented regulatory environment that increases costs, consumes time, and discourages formalization and investment. Over the years, multiple layers of approvals, registrations, reporting requirements, and inspections by different authorities have created a compliance landscape that is often difficult to navigate. For many small businesses, the burden is not only financial but also administrative.

Limited awareness, procedural duplication, and lack of coordination among regulatory bodies result in uncertainty and inefficiency. As a consequence, many enterprises either remain informal or limit their expansion, ultimately constraining economic growth and tax base expansion.

In an increasingly competitive regional environment, improving the ease of doing business is no longer a policy preference—it is an economic necessity. Simplified procedures, predictable regulations, and transparent digital systems can significantly reduce transaction costs, improve productivity, and encourage entrepreneurship. More importantly, a coherent regulatory framework can help shift businesses from survival mode toward growth and innovation. Digital transformation offers a practical pathway to address many of these structural challenges. A unified digital compliance system can consolidate multiple registrations and reporting requirements into a single platform, reducing physical interaction, minimizing discretion, and improving transparency. For SMEs in particular, such systems can save valuable time and resources, allowing them to focus on operations, market expansion, and job creation rather than administrative compliance.

At the same time, regulatory reform must go beyond technology alone. Digital solutions will only deliver meaningful results if they are supported by policy coherence, institutional coordination, and stakeholder engagement. Reform efforts need to be grounded in evidence, informed by business realities, and implemented through a phased and consultative approach. In this context, Freedom Gap Prosperity (FGP), in collaboration with the Islamabad Chamber of Small Traders and Small Industries (ICSTSI), hosted an important stakeholder consultation to deliberate on the concept of a Digital Compliance Gateway under the broader #UnlockPakBusiness initiative. The discussion brought together policy experts, legal practitioners, business representatives, and development professionals to identify practical pathways for reducing compliance burdens and improving the regulatory environment.

Opening the session, Muhammad Anwar, CEO of FGP, emphasized that fragmented procedures and overlapping regulatory requirements discourage entrepreneurship and investment. He noted that creating a market-friendly policy environment requires evidence-based reforms, institutional collaboration, and a clear focus on reducing the operational barriers faced

by businesses, particularly SMEs. Awas Satti, President of ICSTSI, highlighted the importance of sustained public-private dialogue to identify bottlenecks experienced by traders and small enterprises. He stressed that regulatory simplification and digital integration could significantly improve the ease of doing business, encourage documentation of economic activity, and support the transition toward a more formal and inclusive economy.

From a broader economic perspective, Dr. Ali Salmán, Executive Director of the Prime Institute, pointed out that regulatory inefficiencies impose hidden costs on the economy. According to him, reducing unnecessary compliance requirements would enhance productivity, lower transaction costs, and improve Pakistan's competitiveness in regional markets. The discussion also highlighted structural concerns within the current regulatory architecture. Regulatory reforms expert Mohsin Malik observed that businesses today operate within a complex and fragmented environment involving multiple authorities and overlapping mandates. He emphasized the need for coherent reforms supported by a streamlined digital framework to eliminate duplication, reduce uncertainty, and build investor confidence.

Providing a technical perspective, Sher Mohammad, Chairman of the Sustainable Development Committee (ICSTSI), presented an overview of the estimated compliance burden faced by businesses and outlined the proposed Digital Compliance Gateway model. The proposed system aims to integrate registration and reporting requirements across agencies into a single platform, thereby reducing procedural complexity and improving regulatory transparency. Industry representatives further reinforced these concerns through practical insights. Legal Advisor ICSTSI, Asad Taimur, shared ground-level challenges faced by traders, particularly the difficulties arising from multiple registration requirements and repetitive documentation across different agencies. Senior legal expert Dr. Zia Ullah Ranjha highlighted the legal and regulatory overlaps that often result in procedural delays and increased operational costs for businesses.

The consultation concluded with a broader stakeholder dialogue on reform priorities, advocacy strategies, and the need for sustained engagement between policymakers, regulators, and the private sector. Participants agreed that regulatory reform should be viewed not as a one-time intervention but as a continuous process aligned with eco-

nomic realities and technological progress. Pakistan's economic future depends not only on policy intent but on implementation that simplifies processes, builds trust, and enables businesses to grow. A predictable and efficient regulatory environment can unlock entrepreneurship, expand the formal economy, and generate much-needed employment opportunities, particularly for the country's growing youth population.

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Gold prices surge by Rs 13,300 per tola to Rs 563,862



BUSINESS

\$1bn AI fund to empower youth, drive future-ready economy: PIDE VC

BY: APP

ISLAMABAD: Vice Chancellor of the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE) Dr Nadeem Javid has expressed optimism that the federal government's recently announced \$1 billion fund for Artificial Intelligence (AI) would help build a future-ready digital economy and create meaningful opportunities for Pakistan's youth. The initiative envisages establishing a robust AI ecosystem across the country by introducing AI curriculum in all federally run schools, awarding 1,000 fully funded PhD scholarships to students by 2030, and launching a nationwide programme to train one million non-IT professionals in AI skills to enhance productivity and livelihoods.

"Youth is a big reality of Pakistan, as 63 per cent of the population falls under the youth bracket. If we fail to utilize this effectively, it would

become a serious challenge," he said while talking to APP on the sidelines of the recently concluded Pakistan Governance



Forum 2026, held under the theme "Reimagining Governance for URAAN Pakistan." Dr. Javid stressed that sustained economic growth was essential to absorb the growing youth population into productive employment. "If there is economic growth, there will be job creation and

people will be absorbed. Along with jobs, entrepreneurial ventures are equally important," he added.



He said the AI fund could create opportunities for youth-led startups, SMEs and micro-enterprises, including service-oriented ventures and small-scale manufacturing, adding that "Hopefully, many new opportunities will emerge from this initiative where small companies and micro enterprises can take

shape and contribute to economic activity," he added. Highlighting the broader governance perspective, Dr. Javid said development initiatives must be seen within a comprehensive framework rather than in isolation. "Governance is an overarching framework that determines outcomes such as improved livelihoods, job creation and investment inflows," he remarked. Referring to the evolving second phase of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC 2.0), he said new initiatives were being shaped through mutual interests of Pakistan and China, creating synergy with national reform priorities under Uraan Pakistan.

He said that the government's reform agenda focused on key drivers, including exports, energy affordability, efficiency and environmental sustainability, which are vital for improving the investment climate.

PRBC Links Interfaith Dialogue to Pakistan-Romania Trade

TIMES REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan-Romania Business Council (PRBC) held a meeting with Christian pastor Amjad Farooq to discuss interfaith understanding and its link with business and community development.

The discussion focused on how dialogue among faiths and cooperation among institutions can support stable relations and economic ties between Pakistan and Romania, said a press release issued here on Sunday. PRBC Chairman Sohail Shamim Firpo and Advisor and Chief Operating Officer Atif Farooqi met Pastor Amjad Farooq. The meeting reviewed ways to engage communities, encourage ethical conduct in business, and link social values with trade and investment efforts.

Participants said dialogue among different religious groups helps build trust and understanding, which also supports a healthy business climate. They agreed that respect among communities plays a role in long-term economic cooperation. The discussion also covered possible links between civil society groups, faith-based organizations, and the private sector in both countries. Atif Farooqi

said the meeting highlighted the role of values in public life and business. He noted that community service, fairness, and responsibility can support economic activity and strengthen links between Pakistan and Romania. He added that PRBC aims to connect people as well as markets



through such engagements.

Both sides agreed to stay in contact and explore joint initiatives in the future. These may include programs focused on dialogue, small business support, and community participation, with attention to youth and low-income groups.

The Pakistan-Romania Business Council works as a platform to promote trade, investment, and people-to-people contact between the two countries.

MoIP readies PC-I for advanced data processing plant in Khairpur: Wealth Pakistan

BY: INP

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Industries and Production (MoIP) is set to get PC-I approval for the establishment of a state-of-the-art dates processing, storage, and packaging facility in Khairpur district of Sindh, reports Wealth Pakistan. According to an official document, the project is estimated to cost a total of Rs998.9 million. The proposed allocation for the ongoing financial year (FY2025-26) is Rs250 million. The project will be executed soon after approval from the Ministry of Planning, Development, and Special Initiatives. The Technology Upgradation and Skill Development Company (TUSDEC) of the MoIP will supervise the project.

Under the project, advanced technologies will be introduced for cleaning, grading, pitting, process-

ing, packaging, and cold storage of the fruit, thus significantly reducing the post-harvest losses, ensuring fruit quality, creating new job opportunities for local growers, and enabling the fruit to compete in the high-end international markets.

The project is likely to encourage small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to process date by-products such as paste, syrup, and confectionery items. In addition, capacity building and technical training for local farmers and workers will enhance productivity and quality standards.

Speaking to Wealth Pakistan, Mahreen Razaq Bhutto, Member of the National Assembly (MNA) from Khairpur, said the proposed project will play a significant role in adding value to the date industry, particularly in Sindh, where Khairpur is a major hub for date production.

Chamber continue work to strengthen philanthropic efforts

BY: APP

ISLAMABAD: President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Sardar Tahir Mehmood, has said that the spirit of Ramadan teaches compassion, generosity and service to humanity, and institutions working for the welfare of orphaned children reflect these noble values in their true essence.

Addressing an Ifar dinner hosted for the children of Pakistan Sweet Home, he urged the business community to generously participate in supporting and patronizing orphaned children by contributing to their education, health and character building.

He said that these children are the future of Pakistan and, with proper guidance and opportunities, they can grow into doctors, engineers, bureaucrats who will play an important role in the coun-

try's development. Sardar Tahir

Mehmood said that the chamber's tireless efforts in effectively running Pakistan



paid rich tribute to Zamurrad Khan, recipient of Hilal-e-Imtiaz, for his visionary lead-

Sweet Home and transforming it into one of the largest orphan care networks in Asia.

He highlighted that Pakistan Sweet Home is providing shelter, quality education and a nurturing environment to thousands of children. Hundreds of students of the institution have secured admission in leading universities including National University of Sciences and Technology, Quaid-i-Azam University and Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto Institute of Science and Technology as well as various medical colleges, which he described as a remarkable achievement.

Sardar Tahir Mehmood reaffirmed that the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry will continue to support such welfare initiatives under its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs and will work with the business community to strengthen philanthropic efforts for the better future of deserving children.

Number of protective mango bags to surge to 10m after better results: Wealth Pakistan

BY: INP

ISLAMABAD: The number of protective mango bags introduced by the Pakistan Horticulture Development & Export Company (PHDEC) is expected to surge to nearly 10 million this year, reports Wealth Pakistan. These bags aim to reduce post-harvest losses, enhance fruit quality, and expand access to the premium export markets. "This mango protection method has proved a breakthrough for growers and exporters alike," Khawar Nadeem, Manager Agri Products PHDEC, told Wealth Pakistan.

Pakistan produces around 1.8 million tonnes of mangoes annually, yet only about 150,000 tonnes, or 8.3%, are exported - a disparity largely attributed to the losses from pests, blemishes, and handling issues, he said. These losses not only reduce the growers' income but also limit Pakistan's ability to access the

premium export markets, he added. To address losses and make mangoes more competitive in the international market, the PHDEC has introduced bags to shield hanging fruit from fruit flies, dust, and sunburn for 30 to 45 days, thereby reducing reliance on pesticide



spraying. "The result is improved colour, cleaner fruit and stronger acceptance in high-

end markets, such as Europe, America and Japan," Khawar said. In the international market, a 5kg pack of non-bagged produce typically sells for around \$17-18, whereas the same quantity, once bagged, can command up to \$30, and the same is the case in other



markets. Mango-producing nations have extensively adopted the bagging method due to its

proven advantages in protecting and enhancing the fruit quality. The initiative has rapidly evolved from a small pilot project into an industry-wide movement to help narrow the gap between production and exports in Pakistan, Khawar said. In the beginning, the farmers were hesitant to adopt this technique. "We started by distributing 150,000 bags among 25 to 30 growers in Sindh and Punjab. Gradually, as farmers saw the difference in quality and prices, their response changed."

In 2022, the PHDEC distributed 200,000 mango bags free of charge in Punjab and Sindh. Encouraged by positive results, the initiative continued with the same number of bags during 2023 and 2024. By 2025, the growers and exporters themselves procured 1 million bags for the season - a sign that the practice had moved beyond subsidy to commercial adoption, he said.

CDNS achieves Rs. 40 billion in Islamic investment inflows in eight months

BY: APP

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's Islamic finance sector continues to gain momentum as the Central Directorate of National Savings (CDNS) recorded Rs 40 billion in Shariah-compliant investment inflows from July 1, 2025, to February 28, 2026, bringing the institution close to its annual target of Rs 50 billion for the fiscal year 2025-26.

According to a senior CDNS official here on Monday, the achievement reflects growing investor confidence in interest-free savings instruments amid Pakistan's evolving financial landscape.

Nearly 94 per cent of the annual Islamic finance target has already been achieved midway through the fiscal year. "We have revived and reinforced our focus on Islamic finance during the current fiscal year, which is expected to support sustainable growth of Pakistan's Islamic economy," the official said.

He attributed the strong inflows to the issuance of dedicated Islamic bonds and Shariah-compliant savings certificates, which have attracted investors seeking halal returns while contributing to national savings. The latest performance builds on CDNS's recent track record in the Islamic finance segment. During fis-

cal year 2024-25, the directorate successfully met its target of Rs24 billion in Islamic investments. In FY 2023-24, CDNS mobilized approximately Rs75 billion through Islamic bonds alone, establishing a foundation for expanding Shariah-compliant products and institutional reforms.

Officials highlighted that Islamic finance has become an integral component of the global financial system, accounting for a significant share of several major economies. In Pakistan, efforts to promote Islamic financial instruments are aligned with broader goals to diversify financial products, encourage a savings culture, and enhance economic stability. Beyond Islamic finance, CDNS has demonstrated robust overall performance in savings mobilization. By February 15, 2025, the organization had secured Rs765 billion in inflows toward its savings target for FY 2025-26. Ongoing reforms within CDNS aim to improve operational efficiency, accelerate digitization, and introduce innovative savings products tailored to evolving market demands.

With its Islamic finance target nearly achieved well before the close of the fiscal year, CDNS appears poised not only to meet but potentially exceed its goal, reinforcing Pakistan's push toward a more inclusive and resilient Islamic economic framework.

Project planned to improve occupational safety, health standards for workers: Wealth Pakistan

BY: INP

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development has proposed a Rs39.76 million capacity-building project to improve occupational safety and health (OSH) standards for workers and employees, particularly in high-risk and export-oriented sectors, official documents available with Wealth Pakistan show.

The project, titled 'Capacity Building of Workers/Employees regarding Occupational Safety and Health', is scheduled to be implemented over a two-year period from July 2026 to June 2028. Under the proposal, the Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development will act as the sponsoring agency, while the Directorate of Workers Education (DWE) will serve as the executing agency. According to the concept note,

occupational safety and health remains among the most under-addressed areas of Pakistan's labour market, especially in construction,



manufacturing and informal sectors. The document highlights a high incidence of workplace accidents, injuries and occupational diseases, alongside weak safety culture, low awareness among workers and employers, inadequate reporting and monitoring mechanisms, limited institutional capacity for OSH train-

ing, and gaps between national practices and international OSH standards. These deficiencies result in loss of life, reduced produc-



tivity, increased healthcare costs and reputational risks for Pakistan, particularly in export-oriented sectors. The proposed initiative aims to directly train 3,920 workers in occupational safety and health practices and develop six master trainers and instructors to ensure sustainability of training inter-

ventions. In addition, 30 workplace inspections and safety audits are planned to promote compliance with national and international OSH standards.

The document identifies several sectoral priority areas, including construction and infrastructure, health services, food, drink and tobacco industries, oil and gas production and refining, basic metal production, brick kilns and other hazardous labour sectors. These sectors have been prioritised due to higher exposure to occupational risks and their significance in export-oriented economic activity.

The total project cost of Rs39.76 million comprises Rs4.60 million allocated for training of trainers and workshops, Rs9 million for training courses for workers and employees, Rs18.96 million for operating expenses, and Rs7.20 million for purchase of equipment.

LCCI, Turkish Airlines sign MoU to boost business mobility

LAHORE: The Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) here Monday signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Turkish Airlines under the airline's Corporate Club Premium programme, aimed at facilitating international travel for the business community and strengthening institutional cooperation. The MoU was signed by LCCI President Faheem Rehman Saigol and General Manager Turkish Airlines Omer Onder Haberdar. Senior Vice President Tanweer Ahmad Sheikh, Vice President Khuram Lodhi, Executive Committee Members Rana Shoban Akhtar and Anna Randhawa were also present.

Under the agreement, LCCI and its nominated representatives will be able to avail special corporate travel privileges, discounted airfare structures and performance-based incentives offered by Turkish Airlines. The partnership is expected to support the mobility of trade delegations, business leaders and

chamber officials participating in international exhibitions, conferences and investment initiatives.

According to details, the MoU provides LCCI access to Turkish Airlines' corporate travel framework, which includes preferential corporate fares, dedicated reservation support and enhanced travel facilitation services. The agreement also introduces a backend incentive mechanism through which the chamber can earn complimentary tickets based on accumulated travel volume generated through official bookings.

The collaboration will enable smoother travel arrangements for LCCI delegations visiting international markets while reducing travel costs through negotiated corporate pricing. Travelers registered under the chamber's corporate account will continue to receive individual frequent-flyer mileage benefits alongside organizational incentives. — APP

SPORTS



Usman Wazeer knocks out India's Baljit Singh

Samson's 97 puts India into T20 World Cup semi-final against England

KOLKATA: Sanju Samson's sparkling unbeaten 97 kept alive India's dream of retaining the T20 World Cup at home as they knocked out the West Indies with a five-wicket win in Kolkata on Sunday to set up a semi-final against England.

Samson hit 12 fours and four sixes in his superb 50-ball knock in the winner-takes-all final Super Eights match to thrill a capacity 67,000 fans at a pulsating Eden Gardens.

After the West Indies smacked 70 off the last five overs to score 195-4 after being asked to bat, India lost two early wickets but were always up with the required rate.

Samson, opening for the second match in succession, led the way.

When India slipped to 41-2 Samson was joined by captain Suryakumar Yadav (18) and the pair added 58 for the third wicket.

Tilak Varma was next to join Samson and scored 27

off 15 before departing in the for 17 India reached the tar- world to me," Samson said.



15th over with the score 141-4 and India still needing 55.

Samson stood firm and though Hardik Pandya fell

get with four balls to spare to spark celebrations and fireworks.

"It means the whole

"Right from the day I started playing, started dreaming to play for the country, I think this is the day I was waiting

for."

Samson said he learned the art of finishing matches "from the greats like Virat Kohli, from Rohit Sharma."

Jason Holder and Rovman Powell earlier put on an unbroken stand of 76 for the fifth wicket to help the West Indies set the defending champions a target of 196 to stay alive.

The West Indies sprang a surprise at the top of the order, promoting Test captain Roston Chase to open alongside T20 skipper Shai Hope.

That enabled them to bring in an extra spinner, Akeal Hosein, with regular opener Brandon King left out. In their defeat to South Africa last week the West Indies slumped to 83-7 but the new-look opening partnership was more assured.

Spinner Varun Chakravarthy got the first breakthrough, bowling Hope for a sluggish 32.

Shimron Hetmyer raced to 27 off 12 balls before falling to the faintest of

edges off Jasprit Bumrah to make it 102-2.

After Chase fell for 40 and Sherfane Rutherford followed, Powell and Holder launched their brutal late assault.

Powell finished on 34 not out from 19 balls with two sixes and three fours while Holder was unbeaten on 37 off 22 balls with three sixes and two fours.

"Maybe a few short, especially on a chasing ground such as this," said a disappointed Hope. "Probably could have gone a bit more at the end. Probably could have got more at the start as well." It could have been better for India but they dropped three regulation catches in a sloppy fielding display, including Chase when he had made just 15.

South Africa, the only unbeaten side in the tournament, beat Zimbabwe by five wickets earlier on Sunday and will face New Zealand in Kolkata in the first semi-final on Wednesday.

Pak 14&under girls' tennis team departs for Asia Oceania Pre-Qualifiers in Vietnam

BY: SPORTS DESK

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's 14&Under Girls' Tennis Team has departed for Vietnam to compete in the 2026 Asia Oceania Pre-Qualifying Event of the ITF World Juniors Competition, scheduled from 2-7 March at NovaWorld Phan Thiet.

The team, representing the nation on the international stage, comprises Hajira Sohail, Khadija Khalil, Eesha Rabbi, and team captain Sara Mansoor. These young athletes are set to face competitors from across the Asia-Oceania region in a bid to secure qualification for the ITF World Juniors.

The Pakistan Tennis Federation (PTF) has expressed full confidence in the squad, with both the President and Secretary

General extending their best wishes ahead of the tournament.



ment. Officials emphasized the importance of such international exposure for the

development of Pakistan's junior tennis talent. "This is



a significant opportunity for our young girls to gain valuable experience and showcase

their talent at a high level,"

the PTF said in a statement. "We are confident that our team will perform admirably and make the country proud."

The Asia Oceania Pre-Qualifying Event is a critical stepping stone for junior players aspiring to compete on the world stage, providing experience against diverse playing styles and high-level competition. For Pakistan, continued participation in such events reflects the growing focus on nurturing young talent and promoting tennis among the country's youth.

The tournament in Vietnam will see the Pakistan girls face off against regional contenders in both singles and team events, with hopes high that the squad's preparation and skill will translate into strong results.

Back-to-back International success for Pakistan's top ranked Mikaeel Ali

BY: APP

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's No. 1 ranked ITF junior, Mikaeel Ali Baig, has delivered an exceptional back-to-back performance on the international circuit, reinforcing his position as one of the country's leading junior athletes.

Competing first at the higher-tier ITF J60 Guatemala, Mikaeel advanced to the doubles final, demonstrating his consistency and ability to perform against a strong international field, according to information made available here by Pakistan Tennis Federation (PTF) on Sunday.

His deep run at a J60 event highlighted both his competitive maturity and growing presence at higher levels of junior tennis.

Immediately following Guatemala, Mikaeel traveled to Kingston, Jamaica, where he produced a dominant week at the ITF J30

tournament, capturing both the singles and doubles titles.

In singles, Mikaeel defeated opponents from the USA, Brazil, Czech Republic, and Canada en route



to the final, where he secured the championship with a commanding 6-3, 6-1 victory. The win marks his 6th ITF Singles title.

In doubles, partnering with USA's Indra Vergne, he battled through tightly contested matches — including a championship match tiebreak in the semifinals — to earn his 5th ITF Doubles title.

Pakistan's tour of Bangladesh in limbo as ODI squad overhaul on cards

LAHORE: Pakistan's upcoming tour of Bangladesh for a three-match ODI series faces an uncertain future due to the ongoing regional tensions, while significant changes are expected in their squad for the upcoming assignment, sources told Geo Super on Sunday.

The Green Shirts are scheduled to reach Bangladesh on March 9 for the ODI series, with all three matches scheduled to be played at the Shere Bangla National Stadium in Dhaka on March 11, 13 and 15, respectively.

However, the ongoing regional tensions have made the tour uncertain, which, according to the insiders, would only proceed if the prevailing situation does not escalate travel risks or security concerns. Meanwhile, the discussions regarding the Green Shirts' squad for the upcoming assignment are expected to commence this week as the former champions shift their focus towards the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup 2027, set to be co-hosted by South Africa,

Zimbabwe and Namibia.

According to the sources, the selection committee is expected to make significant changes to the composition of the contingent, with youngsters likely to be given the breakthrough at the expense of underperforming first-choice players like Babar Azam, Saim Ayub and Mohammad Nawaz.

Since the Green Shirts do not have an immediate T20 assignment, no swift action is expected regarding the shortest format's squad, but around five to six players are likely to be phased out of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026, sources claimed further. For the unversed, Pakistan last featured in ODIs in November last year when they hosted Sri Lanka for a three-match series and clean-swept it. It marked the second series for pace pacer Shaheen Shah Afridi as the captain in the longer format, with his maiden assignment being a three-match home series against South Africa, which the Green Shirts won 2-1.

Pakistan women's team's return from South Africa faces uncertainty

LAHORE: The Pakistan women's cricket team's return home from South Africa has come in jeopardy due to the ongoing cross-border tensions in the Middle East and the closure of the region's airspace, sources told Geo Super on Sunday.

The national team is scheduled to depart from Durban for Pakistan via Dubai on Monday night following the conclusion of the ODI series earlier today, but the ongoing instability in the Middle East has led to the closure of multiple airports in the region, casting doubts over the side's return.

According to the insiders, the national team will only begin their return journey following the formal announcement of the resumption of flight operations in the region.

The sources further suggested that in case of the continued closure of airspace and

airports, the national team may need to extend their stay in Durban.



It is pertinent to mention that Pakistan toured South Africa for a three-match each T20I and ODI series, both of which were won by the hosts

2-1. The national team capped off the white-ball tour with a

thumping 119-run victory over South Africa in the third ODI at Kingsmead in Durban.

Put into bat first, the Green Shirts piled up a mas-

sive total of 306/8 in their 50 overs, courtesy of half-centuries from Sadaf Shamas and captain Fatima Sana, before a collective bowling effort booked South Africa to a modest 187 in 36.2 overs.

Pakistan squads
T20I: Fatima Sana (c), Aliya Riaz, Ayesha Zafar, Eymaan Fatima, Gull Feroza (wk), Humna Bilal, Muneeba Ali (wk), Nashra Sundhu, Natalia Parvaiz, Umm-e-Hani, Sadia Iqbal, Saira Jabeen, Sidra Amin, Tasmia Rubab and Tuba Hassan.

ODI: Fatima Sana (c), Aliya Riaz, Ayesha Zafar, Diana Baig, Gull Feroza, Muneeba Ali (wk), Najiha Alvi (wk), Nashra Sundhu, Natalia Parvaiz, Umm-e-Hani, Sadaf Shamas, Sadia Iqbal, Sidra Amin, Syeda Aroob Shah and Tasmia Rubab.

Pak edge past China in FIH Hockey World Cup Qualifiers 2026 campaign opener

ISMAILIA: Rana Waheed's twin strike helped Pakistan clinch a narrow 5-4 victory over China in the FIH Hockey World Cup 2026 Qualifiers campaign opener here at the Suez Canal Authority (SCA) Hockey Stadium on Sunday.

The Green Shirts got off to a flying start to the fixture as Sufyan Khan successfully converted the penalty corner in the eighth minute, giving Pakistan an early lead.

China neutralised Pakistan's lead in the opening minute of the second quarter, courtesy of Shihao Du, only for the Green Shirts to reclaim the advantage inside four minutes as Rana Waheed Ashraf struck after being awarded the penalty corner.

Pakistan captain Ammad Butt bolstered Pakistan's lead to 3-1 in the next minute by netting a sensational field goal, which remained intact

until halftime. Abu Mahmood strengthened Pakistan's command on the fixture by scoring through



a penalty corner just five minutes into the penultimate quarter, but China significantly pulled things back as Shihao and Quyang Cuan struck in the 39th and 42nd minutes, respectively.

Waheed Rana ensured a dominant finish to the penultimate quarter for Pakistan as he netted a field goal to bolster their lead to 5-3.

China made a spirited start to the final quarter, with Xiaojia Zhang reducing the deficit to 5-4 through a field goal in the 49th minute, but the side failed to net a late equaliser despite being awarded two penalty corners.

The victory helped Pakistan secure second position in Group B of the FIH Hockey World Cup 2026 Qualifiers, only behind Malaysia on goal difference, whom they next face at the same venue on Monday.

EDB invested USD 5.2 bln in Kazakhstan's economy over 5 years



WORLD NEWS

UNESCO slams US-Israeli strike on Iran girls' school; Malala 'heartbroken'

BY: APP

UNITED NATIONS: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural

tary attacks on Iran on Saturday "a grave violation of humanitarian law." The missiles reportedly destroyed a girl's primary

number of students among the dead. In a statement released on social media, UNESCO expressed deep alarm at the

tional humanitarian law, and that "attacks against educational institutions endanger students and teachers and undermine the right to education."

UNESCO said it joined a host of bodies from across the United Nations system and senior officials, including Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, to condemn the military attacks, as well as the retaliatory strikes by Iran that hit several Middle Eastern countries.

Meanwhile, United Nations Messenger of Peace and Nobel Peace laureate Malala Yousafzai said that she was heartbroken and appalled by the bombing of the school. "The killing of civilians, especially children, is unconscionable, and I condemn it unequivocally," Malala, a Pakistani education activist, said in a social media post, and called for the escalation of violence across the region to end, and for justice and accountability to follow.

President Tokayev Reaffirms Kazakhstan's Solidarity with Gulf Arab States

NADEEM FAISAL BAIGA

ISLAMABAD: The President of Kazakhstan, Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, has conveyed personal messages to the leaders of the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain, and Kuwait.

In his correspondence, the Head of State expressed profound solidarity and support for the peoples of these nations amid the challenging circumstances they currently face. In a firm stance against regional destabilization, President Tokayev strongly condemned all military actions that undermine the sovereignty and security of states regarded by Kazakhstan as friendly and brotherly nations. "Kazakhstan consistently advocates for the resolution of all complex international issues and armed conflicts exclusively through diplomatic means,"

the President affirmed in his messages. The Head of State further underscored Kazakhstan's readiness to extend any necessary assistance to its brotherly Arab nations. He also expressed optimism for the continuation of regular working con-



tacts with their senior leadership to strengthen bilateral cooperation and address pressing regional matters.



Organization, (UNESCO), has called the bombing on a primary school during the United States and Israeli mili-

school in Minab, southern Iran, killing around 150 and wounding almost 100 people, believed to be included a large

impact of the military attacks, noting that pupils in a place dedicated to learning are protected under interna-

Morocco Reaffirms Support for Gulf States

TIMES REPORT

RABAT: King Mohammed VI held several telephone conversations on Saturday with leaders of Gulf countries, reaffirming Morocco's solidarity and strong support for their security and sovereignty. According to an

Mohammed bin Salman, Crown Prince and Prime Minister of Saudi Arabia, and Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, Emir of the Qatar.

During the calls, King Mohammed VI strongly condemned the attacks targeting the sovereignty and territorial security of these brotherly nations. He reiterated Morocco's full support for all legitimate measures taken by these countries to safeguard their security and ensure the safety and peace of their citizens.

The Moroccan King emphasized that the strong fraternal relations and enduring solidarity between the Kingdom of Morocco and the Gulf states remain firm. He stressed that the security and stability of the Arab Gulf countries are closely linked to the security and stability of Morocco.

He further stated that any threat to the security of these nations would be considered a serious and unacceptable act that directly threatens regional stability.



official statement, the Moroccan monarch spoke with Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the United Arab Emirates; Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, King of the Bahrain;

More strikes aimed at Iran after supreme leader Khamenei was assassinated by US-Israel air blitz

JERUSALEM:

Israel launched a new wave of strikes on Tehran on Sunday, saying it aimed to dominate the skies after assassinating Iran's supreme leader and leaving the Islamic Republic grappling to rebuild its leadership amid its biggest test in five decades.

US and Israeli strikes -- and Iranian retaliation -- sent shockwaves through sectors from shipping to air travel to oil, amid warnings of rising energy costs and disruption to business in the Gulf, a strategic waterway and global trade hub.

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said a leadership council composed of himself, the judiciary head and a member of the powerful Guardians Council had temporarily assumed the duties of Supreme Leader following the death of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

The US military said it had sunk an Iranian ship, while Iran's Revolutionary Guards

said they had launched an attack on the US aircraft carrier town of Beit Shemesh, the United Arab Emirates said



er Abraham Lincoln with four ballistic missiles, state media reported.

In a sign of widening turmoil, Israel's ambulance service said nine people were killed by a missile strike in the

and the majority of aerial defence systems in western and central Iran had been dismantled.

It added: "Ali Khamenei was targeted in a precise, large-scale operation carried out by the Israeli Air Force, guided by accurate IDF intelligence, while he was in his central leadership compound in the heart of Tehran, where he was together with additional senior officials".

Israeli military spokesperson Lieutenant Colonel Nadav Shoshani said many targets remained, including sites of military industrial production. "We have the capabilities and the targets to keep going on for as long as necessary," he said. Asked if Israel was considering deploying ground forces, Shoshani said that was not under consideration even though US President Donald Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu have urged Iranians to seize a rare opportunity to topple their leaders.

— Reuters

— Reuters

Azerbaijan State News Agency marks its 106th anniversary

TIMES REPORT

BAKU: AzerTaj, a branch of the Russian Telegraph Agency (ROSTA), AzKavRosta, AzerTA, ZagTA, the State Telegraph Agency under the Cabinet of Ministers, the Azerbaijan State Telegraph Agency, and finally the Azerbaijan State News Agency... Operating under various names throughout its history, AZERTAC celebrates its 106th anniversary.

Founded on March 1, 1920 by the government of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic, AZERTAC has undergone a complex, difficult and honorable path as the first national news agency. On March 2 of the same year, the first news reports signed by AzerTaj were published in the newspaper Azerbaijan. Unfortunately, as a legacy of the republican era, AZERTAC operated as an independent news source for only 58 days.

After the fall of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic, the agency functioned as a branch of the

Telegraph Agency of the Soviet Union (TASS) and over 70 years changed its name seven times, facing strict limitations in news coverage.

the agency regained its historical name -- from March 3, 1995 it was called the State Telegraph Agency under the Cabinet of Ministers, and



Nevertheless, despite these constraints, the agency fulfilled its historical mission to the end.

Following the restoration of Azerbaijan's independence,

from January 17, 2000, the Azerbaijan State Telegraph Agency. By an order of President Ilham Aliyev dated February 26, 2015, the Azerbaijan State Telegraph

Agency was renamed the Azerbaijan State Information Agency (AZERTAC).

Throughout its activity, the agency has chronicled the history of the country and covered the path traversed by the republic. Successfully overcoming numerous challenges, AZERTAC soon after the restoration of state independence began to serve as Azerbaijan's informational window to the world. Today, as the country's main news resource, it is experiencing a new stage of development, continuously improving its operations through modern information technologies and tools, and is recognized as an accurate and reliable source of news. A look at its history makes it clear that the road traveled by Azerbaijan's first national news agency - AZERTAC - has been thorny, complex and difficult. In its early years, the agency had an extremely weak material and technical base. In 1932, the first Kleinshmidt teletype machine, purchased abroad, was installed at the agency.

Finland Backs Moroccan Sahara Autonomy as Most Feasible Solution

TIMES REPORT

MOROCCO: Finland considers that "genuine autonomy under Moroccan sovereignty could constitute a most feasible solution" to the Moroccan Sahara Issue. This position was expressed in a Joint Communiqué adopted in Rabat, on Sunday, following a meeting between the Minister of Foreign Affairs, African Cooperation and Moroccan Expatriates, Nasser Bourita, and Finland's Minister for Foreign Affairs, Elina Valtonen, who is on an official visit to Morocco.

In this respect, Finland "reiterated its support for the autonomy plan presented by Morocco, considering it a serious and credible contribution to the UN-led political process and good basis to achieve a definitive and mutually

acceptable political solution, states the Joint Communiqué.

The two Ministers also "welcomed the adoption of United Nations Security Council Resolution 2797 (2025)" and reaffirmed their



support for the efforts of the UN Secretary General and his Personal Envoy aiming at achieving a just, lasting, and mutually acceptable political solution to the issue of the Moroccan Sahara.

Iran rejects US talks as Larijani dismisses reports of renewed negotiations

BY: WEB DESK

TEHRAN: Iran's security chief Ali Larijani, who was also an adviser to the country's former Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, said in a post on X on Monday that Tehran will not negotiate with the US, in response to a report that Iran is trying to revive its negotiations with Washington. His statement comes in response to Al Jazeera's Breaking News X account, which said in a social media post that the Wall Street Journal has reported on Larijani's "initiative to resume talks with Washington submitted through intermediaries from the Sultanate of Oman."

Larijani further stated that "Trump plunged the region into chaos with his 'delusional fantasies' and now fears more American troop casualties." He stated that because of his actions, his slogan of "America first" was in fact "Israel first," sacrificing US soldiers for the foreign nation's power-hungry ambitions. "Today, the Iranian nation is defending itself," the post reads. "The armed forces of Iran did not initiate

the aggression." Iran has vowed retaliation after the assassination of Supreme Leader Khamenei in what Iranian authorities described as a joint US-Israeli air strike on Tehran. President Masoud Pezeshkian said avenging Khamenei's death was both "a duty and a right".

Iran's leadership moved quickly to project continuity, setting up an interim council comprising the president, the head of the judiciary, and a representative from the Guardian Council. Cleric Ayatollah Alireza Arafai was named to the body, which will govern until the Assembly of Experts selects a permanent supreme leader. The government also announced a 40-day mourning period and seven days of public holidays, as thousands gathered in Tehran to mourn, though the report said some anti-government Iranians were seen celebrating. The conflict has widened sharply on its second day, with fresh Israeli strikes on Tehran and Iranian missile attacks across the region. Israel's ambulance service reported nine deaths in Beit Shemesh, while authorities in Gulf states also reported casualties and damage.

French hard-left firebrand defends Epstein jibe

TIMES REPORT

PERPIGNAN: France's hard-left firebrand Jean-Luc Melenchon on Sunday defended himself against accusations of antisemitism, which were sparked by his mocking the pronunciation of the name "Epstein" during a rally.

The latest row involving the founder of the France Unbowed (LFI) party came ahead of municipal elections next month and the 2027 presidential vote, as calls grow for left-wing politicians to break with the LFI leader.

On Thursday, speaking at a gathering in the southeastern city of Lyon, Melenchon invoked the name of Jeffrey Epstein, after recent disclosures detailed the convicted sex offender's extensive ties to the world's rich and famous.

"I wanted to say 'Epstein', sorry, it sounds more Russian, 'Epsteen'," said Melenchon, a

three-time presidential candidate expected to run again in elections next year.

Frankensteen instead of Frankenstein," he told a laughing audience.



"So now you'll say Epstein instead of Epstein,

The comments sparked outrage from across the politi-

cal spectrum in France.

Melenchon, 74, had said his comments were "ironic" and on Sunday, he rejected the accusations again.

"I am not antisemitic," he told a crowd of some 2,000 people at a rally for an LFI candidate in the southern town of Perpignan. "It wasn't me who made the connection between Epstein and his religion," he said. "That man had no religion, and there is no God who can claim such scum and filth as his own."

"Don't associate Islam with those who kill, and don't associate Epstein with religion either," he said, to enthusiastic applause from an audience of all ages, many waving French and Palestinian flags.

The LFI and Melancon have faced accusations of failing to properly condemn the October 7, 2023 attacks by Palestinian militant group Hamas on Israel.

REAR WINDOW

PHC, ETEA sign MoU for appointments in the High and districts court

WAJID HOTI

PESHAWAR: Peshawar High Court, under the vision of the Hon'ble Chief Justice, is implementing a comprehensive reform agenda to ensure merit, transparency, and standardization in recruitment, enabling the induction of deserving candidates and further strengthening institutional efficiency and credibility. In this regard, the Peshawar High Court has entered into MoUs with the Educational Testing & Evaluation Agency (ETEA) for appointments in the High Court establishment and the District Judiciary across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Under this arrangement, ETEA will manage online applications, biometric verification through NADRA E-Sahulat Centers, conduct computer-based and skill-based examinations, compile results and prepare provisional merit lists in accordance with prescribed weightages and standardized procedures. The testing process will be conducted through a secure and confidential mechanism to ensure transparency and uniformity.

The MoUs are effective from January 2026 for a period of three years, extended by mutual consent, and aim to complete each recruitment cycle within 120 days after the closing date of applications.

Through this initiative, the Peshawar High Court reaffirms its commitment to merit, transparency, institutional integrity and equal opportunity in all recruitments within the High Court and the District Judiciary.

Promotion of 320 Nurses from BPS-17 to BPS-18

TIMES REPORT

PESHAWAR: Provincial Minister for Health Khaleeq Ur Rehman has congratulated 320 nursing officers on their well-deserved promotion from BPS-17 to BPS-18 following the recommendations of the Departmental Promotion Committee meeting held on 03.02.2026.

According to the official notification, Assistant Directors Nursing, Head Nurses, Specialist Nurses, Quality Control Nurses, Clinical Nursing Instructors, and Nursing Instructors (BPS-17) have been promoted to various senior positions including Deputy Director Nursing, Nursing Superintendent, Senior Specialist Nurse, Senior Head Nurse, Nurse Manager, Deputy Quality Control Nurse, Senior Clinical Nursing Instructor, Nursing Tutor, Vice Principal, and Principal (BS-18) on a regular basis with immediate effect.

Minister Health Khaleeq Ur Rehman stated that the promotion of nurses is a recognition of their dedication, professional competence, and invaluable services to the healthcare system of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He emphasized that strengthening the nursing cadre remains a top priority of the government, as nurses are the backbone of hospital care and patient management.

He further said that timely promotions not only boost morale but also enhance service delivery standards across public sector hospitals. The Minister reaffirmed the government's commitment to addressing long-standing service matters of healthcare professionals and ensuring merit-based career progression.

The Health Department remains determined to continue reforms aimed at improving governance, human resource management, and quality healthcare services throughout the province.

Online FIR, Complaint Features in PSM App launched

TIMES REPORT

PESHAWAR: An important meeting was held at the Central Police Office Peshawar under the chairmanship of Inspector General of Police (IGP) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Zulfiqar Hameed, to review a comprehensive strategy aimed at providing modern and integrated services to citizens.



The meeting was attended by the Additional ICPs for Headquarters, Investigation, and Internal Accountability, along with the Deputy Inspectors General (DIGs) for IT, Finance, and Operations, as well as the SP Complaint CPO. Participants held detailed discussions on introducing online FIR registration and complaint submission features in the Police Sahulat Mobile App (PSM), with the objective of making all police services across the province accessible to citizens through a single platform.

The PSM app already offers several services at the click of a button, including issuance of character certificates and other police documents, learner driving licenses, tenant and employee verification tracking, lost and found reporting, blood donation services, and direct contact with emergency response. The meeting also considered ensuring public access through additional channels alongside the mobile app, including a web portal, Police Facilitation Centers, helpline services, and front desk systems, so that all segments of society can benefit from easy and equal access.

A proposal was also reviewed to integrate various digital and operational police systems into a unified platform to enhance data sharing, information flow, and overall performance coordination. This initiative is expected to eliminate duplication of work while strengthening transparency and accountability.

Addressing the meeting, IGP Zulfiqar Hameed stated that the use of modern technology would help bridge the gap between the public and the police, significantly improving service delivery. He directed participants to ensure the long-term sustainability of the new digital system, including technical support, data security, regular updates, and staff training.

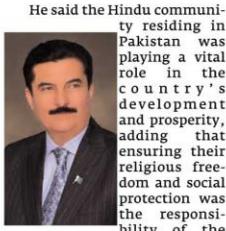
The IGP further instructed officials to prepare a comprehensive financial and technical plan to keep the system functional and effective on a permanent basis. He emphasized that all proposals should be transformed into an actionable plan and implemented at the earliest.

KP Governor greets Hindu community on Holi, reiterates commitment to minority rights

TIMES REPORT

PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi on Monday extended heartfelt greetings to the Hindu community on the joyous occasion of Holi, reaffirming the government's commitment to safeguarding minority rights and promoting interfaith harmony in the country.

In his message, the Governor said that Holi is a festival of colours, love, tolerance and brotherhood that conveys the message of mutual respect, peace and unity.



He said the Hindu community residing in Pakistan was playing a vital role in the country's development and prosperity, adding that ensuring their religious freedom and social protection was the responsibility of the state. He said that the Pakistan Peoples Party had always taken

practical steps to protect the rights of minorities and to integrate them into the national mainstream.

He said that the party's leadership had strengthened minority rights through legislation and had also ensured representation of the Hindu community in the Upper House. The Governor referred to the nomination of Krishna Kumari Kohli, a woman from the underprivileged Hindu community of Thar, to a Senate seat, describing it as a clear manifestation of the commitment of Bilawal

Bhutto Zardari that minorities are equal citizens of Pakistan. Faisal Karim Kundi said the leadership of the Pakistan Peoples Party had always made interfaith harmony, tolerance and democratic values the cornerstone of its politics, terming this vision essential for a peaceful and strong Pakistan.

He prayed that the festival of Holi would bring happiness, peace, stability and brotherhood across the country and further strengthen Pakistan's journey towards progress and prosperity.

Senator Niaz Ahmad Elected Chairman of Senate Committee on Less Developed Areas

TIMES REPORT

ISLAMABAD: An important meeting of the Functional Committee of the Upper House on Problems of Less Developed Areas was held at Parliament House to elect its chairman. Committee members unanimously elected Niaz Ahmad as Chairman of the committee.

During the meeting, Dinesh Kumar nominated Senator Niaz Ahmad for the position, and the proposal was seconded by Jan Muhammad. With the unanimous support of the members, Senator Niaz Ahmad was elected Chairman.

Senators Dinesh Kumar and Jan Muhammad congratulated Senator Niaz Ahmad on his election and assured him of their full cooperation. They expressed

their commitment that the committee would play a key role in addressing the issues faced by

into the national development mainstream.

In his remarks, Chairman

and ensure practical measures for their resolution so that these regions could become equal part-



less developed and underprivileged areas of the country. They further emphasized that all members would work with mutual consultation and consensus to integrate these regions

Niaz Ahmad thanked the committee members for reposing their trust in him. He said that, with the support of all members, he would effectively highlight the issues of less developed areas

in national progress.

The meeting was attended by Senators Dinesh Kumar, Jan Muhammad, Chairman Niaz Ahmad, and senior officials of the Upper House.

KP Chief Secretary Reviews Ramadan Relief, Development Projects and Digitization Drive

TIMES REPORT

PESHAWAR: Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Shahab Ali Shah chaired a high-level meeting to review progress on the province-wide Ramadan relief measures, priority development schemes, afforestation campaign, land use reforms, and the government's accelerated digital transformation agenda.

The meeting was briefed that the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Ramadan relief measures are being implemented in full swing, with real-time oversight through a dedicated Live Dashboard developed by the Performance Management & Reforms Unit (PMRU) at the Chief Secretary's Office. The dashboard enables evidence-based, on-the-spot decision-making, allowing district administrations and line departments to respond swiftly to market irregularities and public complaints.

Since the start of Ramadan, over 100,000 inspections of business outlets and essential commodity units have been conducted across the province. Violations were detected in 29,000 cases, resulting in fines and registration of FIRs against offenders. The Chief Secretary directed officials to adopt a zero-tolerance approach towards profiteering, hoarding, and price manipulation, emphasizing that uninterrupted supply and price

stability of essential commodities remain non-negotiable during the holy month.

The meeting was informed

Under the Peshawar Uplift Programme, projects have been strategically categorized into two priority tiers. Key interven-

guards.

On the digital governance front, it was informed that 170 public services will be digitized



that daily monitoring of relief activities is underway to ensure effective service delivery at the grassroots level. Simultaneously, the provincial afforestation campaign is progressing vigorously, with clear targets assigned to district administrations to ensure transparency, survival rates, and measurable environmental impact.

On the development front, the Chief Secretary was apprised that high-impact, priority projects are being fast-tracked through focused funding and close performance tracking. Special emphasis is being placed on near-completion schemes to ensure early public dividends and optimal utilization of resources.

The meeting further reviewed progress on urban planning reforms. In line with approved Land Use Plans and Master Plans, the Land Use and Building Control Authority is now processing building plan approvals in accordance with modern urban planning principles, incorporating traffic management considerations and environmental safe-

ty June under the Cashless Action Plan through the KP IT Board. This initiative aims to enhance transparency, reduce human interface, streamline service delivery, and promote a cashless, citizen-centric governance ecosystem.

Addressing the participants, Chief Secretary Shahab Ali Shah reiterated that public relief during Ramadan remains the provincial government's top priority. He directed all departments to maintain coordinated efforts, accelerate reform initiatives, and ensure timely completion of development projects, afforestation targets, and digitization milestones to deliver tangible governance outcomes to the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Meeting reviews overall performance of KP Excise Deptt

TIMES REPORT

PESHAWAR: A high-level review meeting on the overall performance of the Excise, Taxation and Narcotics Control Department was held under the chairmanship of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Excise, Taxation and Narcotics Control, Syed Fakhar Jehan, to assess progress on key targets, ongoing initiatives and service delivery reforms across the province.

The meeting was held at the Directorate General of Excise in Hayatabad, Peshawar and focused on the performance of various wings, including motor vehicle registration, taxation and other allied services of department in the province.

Secretary Excise, Taxation and Narcotics Control Khalid Ilyas, Director General Excise Abdul Haleem Khan, directors of different wings, Excise and Taxation Officers and other senior officials attended the meeting.

The provincial minister was given a comprehensive briefing on



the department's progress against assigned tasks, achievement of set targets and overall performance.

Directing the officers to further accelerate their efforts, the minister stressed that all targets related to public service delivery, quality of services and institutional performance must be achieved within the stipulated timelines.

The minister termed the special and choice number plates initiative as a major and distinctive step, stating that the project has

received an encouraging public response and significant inter-

Doing Business model, the minister directed that procedures across all wings of the Excise Department be further simplified, made more transparent and efficient so that citizens do not face unnecessary difficulties and the department plays an effective role in promoting good governance.

The minister said that provision of quality public services and maximum facilitation to citizens remains a top priority of the provincial government, in line with the vision of Imran Khan and under the leadership of Chief Minister Muhammad Sohail Afridi.

He reiterated that through institutional reforms, enhanced transparency and the introduction of modern facilities across all wings of the department, public service delivery will be made more effective and no effort will be spared to ensure improved and citizen-friendly services.

Emphasising the Ease of