

## PM lauds President Trump's leadership for successfully concluding ceasefire in Lebanon

### TIMES REPORT

ANTALYA: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Friday lauded US President Trump for his leadership that led to the successful conclusion of the ceasefire in Lebanon.

The prime minister expressed his warm regards during a courtesy call on paid on him by Senior Advisor to the US President for Arab and African Affairs, on the sidelines of the 5th Antalya Diplomacy Forum (ADF 2026) in Antalya, Türkiye, a Prime Minister's Office news release said.

During the cordial meeting, the prime minister conveyed his warm regards for President Donald Trump, while fondly recalling his own warm and cordial interactions with him. He reiterated deep appreciation for President Trump's bold and decisive leadership that had led to the ceasefire between Pakistan and India last year, when both countries were on the brink of war.

The prime minister lauded President Trump for his leadership that led to the successful conclusion of the ceasefire in Lebanon.

The two sides also discussed current regional developments including Pakistan's peace efforts that led to the ceasefire as well as the historic Islamabad Talks. The prime minister emphasized the importance of strengthening Pakistan-U.S. bilateral relations, especially economic and trade cooperation, as well as matters of mutual interest in multilateral diplomacy. Massad Boulos conveyed greetings to the Prime Minister from President Donald Trump and appreciated Pakistan's constructive contributions to regional stability. He also reiterated the United States' interest in deepening engagement with Pakistan on shared priorities, including counter-terrorism, economic development, and addressing global challenges.



## Trump thanks Pakistan as Iran opens Hormuz for passage of commercial vessels

### NEWS DESK

ISLAMABAD: After the opening of the Strait of Hormuz by Iran, US President Donald Trump has extended gratitude to Pakistan, its "great" Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Chief of Defence Forces and Chief of Army Staff Field Marshal Asim Munir, calling them "two fantastic people".

As a result of peace initiative led by Pakistan, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi has said that in line with the ceasefire in Lebanon, the passage for all commercial vessels through the Strait of Hormuz is "declared completely open for the remaining period of ceasefire, on the coordinated route as already announced by the Ports and Maritime Organisation of the Islamic Republic of Iran".

US President Trump also

thanks Iran for opening the Strait of Hormuz. In a statement on X, Trump said that Iran has announced the com-

plete opening of the Strait of Hormuz. The Strait of Hormuz is fully ready for traffic. Thank you, Iran. US President Donald Trump has said that the American naval blockade will remain in place "until our transaction with Iran is 100 per cent complete".



President Donald Trump on Friday welcomed Iran's announcement that the crucial Strait of Hormuz will

reopen to shipping, but said a US blockade of Iranian ports would continue until a peace deal is signed. "THANK YOU!" Trump wrote on his Truth Social platform, saying that Iran had announced the narrow waterway was "FULLY OPEN AND READY FOR FULL

PASSAGE."

In a second message a few minutes later, Trump posted that "The naval blockade will remain in full force and effect as it pertains to Iran, only, until our transaction with Iran is 100% complete." "This process should go very quickly in that most of the points are already negotiated," Trump said, using his trademark style of all-capital letters. Trump had said to reporters on Thursday that a peace deal with Iran was "very close" despite the fact that talks led by Vice President JD Vance in Pakistan at the weekend did not reach any breakthrough. Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi had announced earlier Friday that the strait, vital for the global trade in oil and other commodities, will remain "completely open" as long as a ceasefire in the Middle East lasts.

## Trump says he may go to Pakistan if U.S. & Iran reach peace deal

### STAFF REPORT

WASHINGTON :United States President Donald Trump said Thursday that he might visit Islamabad if a deal is reached there between the U.S. and Iran.

"I would go to Pakistan," Trump told reporters at the White House when asked if he would visit the country, which has played a mediating role between the U.S. and Iran, to seal the deal.

"Pakistan has been great. The Field Marshal (Syed Asim Munir) has been great. The Prime Minister (Shehbaz Sharif) has been really great in Pakistan so I might go."

"They've been so good," he continued. "If a deal is signed in Islamabad, I might go." Trump also said the two sides will "probably, maybe" resume in-person talks over the weekend.

"It's looking very good that we're going to make a deal with Iran and it's going to be a good deal, it's going to be a deal with no nuclear weapons," Trump said. "We have a lot of agreement with Iran."

Trump said he may not need to extend the current two-week ceasefire with Iran, which expires next week. "We're doing well, I can tell you," Trump said. "I'm not sure it needs to be extended."

The U.S. is currently enforcing a blockade on all Iranian ports as the ceasefire between Washington and Tehran is set to expire next week. Talks to end the war between the two countries failed in Islamabad last week, but the U.S., Iran and Pakistan have remained in contact.

The Pakistani Foreign Office confirmed Thursday that Washington and Tehran were in touch through Pakistan to set up a second round of talks but said a date had not yet been decided on.

## CM approves initiation of a pre feasibility study for the railway section

Sohail Afridi chairs 20th BoDs meeting of KPUMA, issues instructions for improved mobility systems

### TIMES REPORT

PESHAWAR: The 20th meeting of the Board of Directors of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Urban Mobility Authority was held in Peshawar under the chairmanship of Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Muhammad Sohail Afridi. The meeting undertook a comprehensive review of key issues pertaining to the improvement of urban mobility systems across the province, with a particular focus on sustainable solutions to traffic congestion and the promotion of modern transport infrastructure. Participants were briefed in detail on ongoing initiatives as well as the forward roadmap. A range of proposals were presented to enhance the efficiency, integration, and modernization of the urban transport ecosystem in line with emerging mobility needs. During the meeting, the Chief Minister approved the initiation of a pre feasibility study

for the railway section connecting Peshawar, Nowshera, and Jahangira, along with the allocation of PKR 13.162 million for

granted approval to the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Urban Mobility Authority to enter into a consultancy agreement with Pak

preliminary feasibility study for the Peshawar-Torkham railway project be expedited on a priority basis, highlighting its critical



this purpose. Emphasizing the strategic importance of the project, he noted that it would significantly improve regional connectivity and facilitate more efficient movement of people and goods.

He directed the relevant authorities to ensure timely completion of the feasibility study in accordance with technical and professional standards. The Chief Minister also

Austria Fachhochschule Institute of Applied Sciences. The collaboration aims to leverage advanced technical expertise and international best practices to strengthen project design and implementation.

The Chief Minister further approved the associated terms and conditions, budgetary provisions, and related expenditures. Additionally, the Chief Minister also directed that the

role in enhancing regional trade and strengthening cross-border connectivity. Reiterating the government's commitment to sustainable urban development, the Chief Minister instructed the Authority to proactively develop innovative, data-driven, and forward-looking proposals to address growing traffic challenges and improve both intra-city and inter-district connectivity.

## KP Govt remain committed to the supremacy of the Constitution: CM

PESHAWAR: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Muhammad Sohail Afridi, addressing a Lawyers' Jirga held in Peshawar, stated that the proposal to convene the Jirga had emanated from judges of the honourable judiciary with the objective of enabling a structured and lawful response to an unconstitutional and irregular governance environment where human rights and the justice system is suffocating with every passing day. Addressing the legal fraternity, the Chief Minister underscored that the lawyers' community possesses the resolve, capacity, and institutional standing to uphold constitutional order. He emphasized that the present moment demands principled action, warning that failure to assert the rule of law could have long-term implications for democratic freedoms and civil liberties. Expressing serious concern over the non-compliance with judicial directives, the Chief Minister noted that despite authorization from three judges of the Islamabad High Court to meet illegally incarcerated former Prime Minister Imran Khan, the Superintendent of Adiala Jail did not implement the court's orders. He termed this as a matter of grave institutional concern, stating that disregard for judicial authority undermines both constitutional supremacy and the credibility of the rule of law. The Chief Minister reiterated that his government and political party remain committed to the supremacy of the Constitution, equitable justice, and the protection of fundamental rights.

## Punjab Govt's negligence over Bushra Bibi's Health is condemnable: Shafi Jan

### TIMES REPORT

PESHAWAR: Special Assistant to the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Information and Public Relations, Shafi Jan, has expressed serious concern over the negligence of the Punjab government and Adiala Jail administration regarding the eye condition of Bushra Bibi, wife of PTI founder chairman Imran Khan, terming it regrettable and condemnable.

In a statement issued here, Shafi Jan said that the Punjab government and Adiala Jail administration have repeatedly shown negligence regarding the health of Imran Khan and Bushra Bibi. He stated that due

to the lack of timely and quality medical facilities, Bushra Bibi's eye condition worsened, leading to her emergency hospitalization and eye surgery.

He further said that keeping the process of shifting Bushra Bibi to the hospital secret and failing to provide her timely medical treatment constitutes a serious violation of human rights. He added that ignoring human values in the face of political differences is deeply unfortunate.

Shafi Jan stated that Bushra Bibi is a non-political woman and the treatment meted out to her is inappropriate. He further added that such actions on political grounds are against democratic traditions and human principles.

The Special Assistant said that tactics used to weaken Imran Khan have failed in the past and will continue to fail in the future.

## Shafi Jan expresses grief over gas Pipeline blast in Haripur

PESHAWAR: Special Assistant to Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Information and Public Relations Shafi Jan has expressed deep sorrow and grief over tragic incident of a fire caused by gas pipeline explosion near Hattar Industrial Estate in Haripur, which resulted in the loss of precious human lives.

In a statement issued here, he said that death of eight individuals including women and children, in this unfortunate incident is extremely painful and distressing. He extended heartfelt condolences and sympathies to the bereaved families. He further stated that Rescue 1122 and other relevant departments promptly initiated relief operations and managed to bring the fire under control in time. Rescue personnel from Haripur along with teams from neighboring districts also took part in the emergency response efforts.

Special Assistant Shafi Jan added that injured were provided with the best possible medical facilities in hospitals. He emphasized that provincial government stands with affected families in this difficult time and will not leave them alone under any circumstances. Shafi Jan also prayed for forgiveness and eternal peace of the departed souls and for the speedy recovery of the injured.

## Pakistan at heart of Iran-US talks as PM Shehbaz and Field Marshal Asim Munir' leadership earns global praise: Minister

### TIMES REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Public Affairs Unit Rana Mubashar Iqbal on Friday appreciated Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif for gaining global attention and trust, expressing confidence in their leadership and in the continuity of Iran-US dialogue toward a logical end. While speaking to PTV News channel, he said that the world was facing severe unrest and rising tensions with far-reaching consequences, but the role played by Pakistan's leadership in such a critical situation has been unforgettable, particularly in efforts to prevent escalation and avert conflict, which he described as a major achievement. He said the prevention of war and de-escalation in such a volatile environment was a significant credit to Pakistan's leadership, adding that the country had demonstrated responsible and constructive diplomacy at a crucial time when global tensions were high.

He further appreciated the role of Saudi Arabia, Qatar, China, Turkey and other Islamic countries for placing trust in Pakistan's leadership, noting that Pakistan has emerged as a key point of attention on the global diplomatic stage, with countries across Asia and beyond looking towards its role in maintaining stability. He also mentioned Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's recent visits to Saudi Arabia and Qatar, saying these engagements reflected Pakistan's growing diplomatic outreach and improving international image, with the world increasingly acknowledging Pakistan's position as a responsible and trusted partner.

# CityNews

## Seminar on "Life-Changing Communication Skills" organized

OUR CORRESPONDENT

MALAKAND: The Department of Education in collaboration with Youth Development Center & Directorate of Students Societies, University of Malakand organized a Seminar on "Life-Changing Communication Skills" in Seminar Hall,



Department of Education, University of Malakand. The Guest Speaker was Dr Atta ur Rahman, Ex-Federal Secretary, Government of Pakistan & Mr Alamgir, Principal (Retired), Elementary & Secondary Education, Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa graced the event as Guest of Honor. Dr Atta ur Rahman shared valuable insights into the practical application of communication skills in academic & professional contexts. Dr Ibtar Khan, Chairperson of Department of Education, UoM welcomed the distinguished guest at University of Malakand & extended heartfelt gratitude to him for enlightening the young students on various modes of communication & public speaking skills.

Dr Iqbal Ahmad, Associate Professor, Department of Education, UoM moderated the seminar. The Honorable Vice Chancellor, UoM Prof Dr Rashid Ahmad presented souvenir to the distinguished guests as a token of appreciation & emphasized the need of communication skills for enhancing academic & professional competencies of students. The event was graced by faculty members & students of Main Campus & Women Sub-Campus Bathkela, University of Malakand.

## Scholar Niaz Muhammad presents Ph.D dissertation

OUR CORRESPONDENT

MALAKAND: Niaz Muhammad, PhD Scholar in Department of Commerce & Management Sciences, University of Malakand has ceremonially presented his PhD dissertation titled "CEO Characteristics &



Stock Price Crash Risk in BRICS Countries" under the supervision of Dr Zahid Ali, Associate Professor, Department of Commerce & Management Sciences, University of Malakand. The External Examiners were Prof Dr Naveed from City University of Science & Technology and Prof Dr Imran Khan from Quertuba University, Peshawar.

The Chairperson, Department of Commerce & Management Sciences, UoM Prof Dr Nazim Ali & Faculty Members Congratulated Dr Niaz Muhammad & Research Supervisor for PhD Public Defense.

## KP Law Minister speeds up farm support

OUR CORRESPONDENT

KOHAT: Development projects aimed at boosting agriculture and improving infrastructure have been accelerated in PK-90, Kohat, the constituency of the Provincial Law Minister Aftab Alam, with authorities prioritizing farmer support and public amenities. Under funding from the Law Minister and Member of the National Assembly Shehryar Afridi, local officials and community elders have distributed fencing material to farmers to protect demonstration orchards established under a Model Farm Services Centre initiative. The supplies, including barbed wire and angle iron, are intended to shield fruit orchards from livestock and other potential damage.

District Director Agriculture Dr. Shakralullah said the agriculture extension department in Kohat was taking effective steps to support both small and large farmers adding that cooperation from the district's political leadership was playing a key role in advancing the sector.

Similarly, construction work on the Bosti Khel Road in the Tribal Tehsil Darra Adam Khel is progressing well, the officials said. The project includes road development along with drainage channels and retaining walls to manage rains runoff, aiming to improve mobility and reduce flood risks in the area.

## Chronic Polio Refusals resolved after Field Outreach Drive

OUR CORRESPONDENT

KARAK: The District authorities in Karak have successfully resolved multiple polio vaccine refusal cases following an intensive field outreach led by the Additional Deputy Commissioner (General) Sahibzada Samiullah.



Accompanied by the N-Stop Officer Dr. Inam, the ADC visited various localities to review refusal cases and engaged directly with the hesitant parents, highlighting the risks of polio and the importance of vaccination. Sustained awareness and counseling efforts persuaded several families to allow their children to receive polio drops, with the ADC personally administering vaccines in some cases. The district administration also urged the local elders and influential figures to support awareness campaigns, stressing that public cooperation remains essential for the complete eradication of polio.

## Meeting reviews implementation on KP Government orders

TIMES REPORT

PESHAWAR: In light of the provincial government's directives, an important meeting was held under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner Peshawar, Captain (R) Sanaullah Khan. The meeting was attended by Additional Deputy Commissioner (General) Muhammad Daud Saleemi, Additional Deputy Commissioner (Finance) Muhammad Asghar Soorani, along with administrative officers and officials from relevant departments.

The purpose of the meeting was to conduct a detailed review of the progress made on the implementation of provincial government directives. On the occasion, the Deputy Commissioner emphasized that full and timely compliance with government instructions is the foremost responsibility of every department, and providing better service delivery to the public remains the administration's

top priority.

He warned all officers that

The Deputy Commissioner stressed the need for enhanced

overall performance and service delivery system of District



any delay, negligence, or irresponsibility will not be tolerated. He directed all departments to fulfill their responsibilities and immediately address the shortcomings identified in the field in accordance with the District Service Delivery Dashboard.

coordination among all institutions, strengthening of the reporting system, and ensuring timely achievement of all targets set by the provincial government. He further directed each department to regularly update its performance records to maintain transparency in the

Peshawar. In conclusion, he stated, "Public service is our top priority. We must bring improvement in every sector and accelerate the service delivery process to resolve public issues. Any kind of negligence in this regard will not be tolerated."

## Official inspects Health Center and Sanitation Drive in Bannu VCs

CORRESPONDENT

BANNU: Assistant Commissioner (Headquarters) Bannu Allah Nawaz Khan carried out detailed inspections of Rural Health Centre Choriwala and Sanitation work in several village councils in Tehsil Bannu, following directives from Deputy Commissioner Bannu Muhammad Fahim and in line with the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government's instructions.

At RHC Choriwala, the Assistant Commissioner reviewed staff attendance, availability of medicines, and

the functioning of the OPD, laboratory, growth monitoring center, and

Khan visited the village councils of Choriwala, Tarkhiwala, Kot

managed by the Local Government Department.



vaccination unit. He also met with patients to inquire about the quality of medical services being provided.

Later, Allah Nawaz

Qalandar, Manduri Patal Shah, and Bazaar Ahmad Khan to inspect ongoing sanitation efforts under the Pak Safa Khyber Pakhtunkhwa program

During the visits, he assessed the overall cleanliness situation, staff attendance, and the use of machinery and equipment.

## Wanted criminal killed in police encounter

TIMES REPORT

PESHAWAR: A highly wanted and dangerous criminal, Sartaj alias Sartaje, was killed in a police encounter in the jurisdiction of Pishatkharra Police Station.

According to police officials the encounter took place near Hazrat Baba area of Pishatkharra during a raid conducted on intelligence reports regarding the presence of the accused in the locality. As the police attempted to apprehend him, the suspect tried to flee and opened indiscriminate fire on the police with intent to kill.

The police retaliated with professional skill and strategy. During the exchange of fire, the accused was fatally hit—reportedly by firing from his own accomplices—and died on the spot while other suspects managed to escape. The deceased criminal was wanted in multiple serious cases including dacoity, robbery, murder, attempted murder, attacks on police with intent to kill and firing on civilians. Several cases were registered against him at Pishatkharra Police Station between 2022 and 2026 under various sections of law, including robbery, attempted murder, illegal arms, narcotics, and other criminal charges. Police also recovered weapons from his possession. Authorities reiterated their commitment to maintaining law and order in Peshawar, stating that no lawbreaker will be spared under any circumstances.

## Mardan Public Meeting will be a success, claim PTI leaders

CORRESPONDENT

MARDAN: Leaders of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), Senator Zeeshan Khanzada and Member of Provincial Assembly Tariq Aryani, have strongly condemned what they termed government negligence in the medical treatment of former Prime Minister Imran Khan and his wife. They demanded that Imran Khan be provided proper medical facilities under the supervision of his family doctors.

They expressed these views while addressing a press conference at Mardan Press Club regarding the public rally scheduled for April 19 in Railway station ground Mardan. PTI district president Ayaz Safi,

Shahid Anwar, and members of the media

Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab, and other regions are

Complex, establishment of kidney and burn centers, expansion of emergency and ICU facilities, completion of the District Headquarters (DHQ) Hospital, setting up a medical university, and construction of underpasses and flyovers to address traffic issues.

PTI leaders said the party is patriotic and peace-loving. They added that Imran Khan had directed the postponement of the Liaquat Bagh rally due to domestic and international circumstances and the arrival of foreign guests. According to them, he later instructed that a major rally be held in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, leading to the selection of Mardan as the venue.



committee were also present on the occasion.

The leaders stated that the April 19 rally in Mardan aims to send a global message that the people of Pakistan stand with Imran Khan.

They claimed that hundreds of thousands of people from Khyber

expected to attend the gathering.

They announced that Chief Minister Sohail Afridi is expected to unveil a multi-billion-rupee development package for Mardan.

The package is likely to include the upgradation of Mardan Medical

## Security Forces Parade held at Women University Mardan

CORRESPONDENT

MARDAN: Women University Mardan witnessed an impressive and spiritually uplifting security parade, where security police and guards demonstrated exceptional discipline, dedication, and professional excellence.

The ceremony commenced with the recitation of the Holy Quran, creating an atmosphere of serenity and reflection. The synchronized commands of "Ehsaan Baash" and "Hoshiyaar" resonated across the grounds, symbolizing alertness and renewed commitment among the personnel.

The parade featured a well-coordinated drill display, where the rhythmic march, unified

movements, and precision of the security staff reflected not only their

Following the drill, a detailed weapons inspection and cleaning session

trust and protection rather than mere tools. The Security Officer



training but also their unwavering sense of duty. The performance highlighted that security is not merely a routine responsibility but a solemn commitment to safeguarding the institution.

was conducted. This segment underscored the sense of accountability and professionalism among the personnel, who handled their equipment with great care and responsibility—viewing them as instruments of

reviewed the parade and appreciated the outstanding performance of the personnel. In his remarks, he emphasized that security is a noble duty that demands vigilance, integrity, and sacrifice. He commended

the team for their preparedness and dedication to maintaining a safe and secure environment.

The event served as a strong message of peace, responsibility, and readiness, reaffirming the university's commitment to ensuring the safety of its students, faculty, and staff at all times.

Such initiatives not only strengthen the security framework of the institution but also foster a sense of confidence and reassurance within the university community. The efforts of these dedicated personnel stand as a testament to their silent yet invaluable role in protecting lives and enabling a secure academic environment.

# Prayers at Faisal Masjid for COAS success, call for unity echoes in khutba



## Archbishop welcomes court move to regularise slums

**TIMES REPORT**

**RAWALPINDI:** Archbishop of Rawalpindi-Islamabad Dr Joseph Arshad has welcomed the Federal Constitutional Court's directive to formulate a policy for the regularisation of slums within one month, calling it a significant step toward protecting the rights of underprivileged communities.

In a statement issued on Wednesday, the archbishop said the decision reflects a positive move to address the long-standing concerns of marginalised groups. He stressed that residents of informal settlements are equal citizens and deserve basic amenities, legal protection, and dignified housing.

"The court's initiative offers hope for a fair resolution of issues faced by those living in katchi abadis," he said.

He added that minority and low-income groups, including the Christian community, have welcomed the development and expect the Capital Development Authority (CDA) to implement the court's directives through a transparent and practical policy, ensuring early legal protection for such settlements.

## Muhammad Sajaul completes M.Phil Degree

**TIMES REPORT**

**PESHAWAR:** Muhammad Sajaul has successfully completed his MPhil degree in Zoology from Quertu University of Science and Information Technology under the supervision of Dr. Nasir Shoaib. The title of his research thesis is "Histopathological Effects of Permethrin on Various Organs of Grass Carp," in which he conducted a detailed study on the impact of permethrin on different organs of grass carp.



On this achievement, Muhammad Sajaul expressed gratitude to Almighty Allah and extended his heartfelt thanks to his parents and respected teachers for their guidance and support throughout his academic journey.

## Shangla Judiciary honors Haq Nawaz Khan

**OUR CORRESPONDENT**

**SHANGLA:** The District Judiciary Shangla held a dignified ceremony at Judicial Complex Alpuri to honor outgoing Bar Council member Haq Nawaz Khan, District and Sessions Judge Mumrez Khan



Khalil presided over the event and praised his role in strengthening relations between the bench and bar. Senior lawyers and bar representatives attended and paid tribute to his services, highlighting his contributions to upholding the dignity of the legal profession. At the end of the ceremony, a commemorative shield was presented to Haq Nawaz Khan along with best wishes for his future.

## Islam Emphasizes Strengthening Family Ties, Says Pir Syed Mohi-ud-Din Mahboob

**TIMES REPORT**

**HARIPUR:** Maintaining ties with relatives and fulfilling their rights is a hallmark of true believers, while severing family relations leads to Allah's displeasure and destruction. Strengthening family bonds (Silah Rahmi) is a source of increased suste-



nance and blessings in life, and true kinship is that one continues to maintain relations even if relatives themselves break contact.

These views were expressed by Nageeb-ul-Ashraf, Islamic thinker, Abu Zain Pir Syed Mohi-ud-Din Mahboob Hanafi Qadri Kazmi Maturidi, Sajjada Nashin, while addressing a large gathering of disciples and visitors during Friday congregational prayers at Khanqah Mahboobabad Sharif, Havelian.

He said that in Islam, the family system and the strengthening of relationships are considered an integral part of faith and the foundation of a stable society. Islam, he added, is not merely a set of rituals but a complete code of life that guides human relations, where good treatment of relatives is termed as "Silah Rahmi" and is strongly emphasized in the Holy Qur'an and Hadith.

Referring to various verses of the Holy Qur'an, he stated that fulfilling the rights of relatives and maintaining ties is a characteristic of true believers, whereas breaking ties with kin leads to Allah's anger and punishment.

# Aleem Khan visits Turkish Embassy, expresses condolences over tragic school shootings

**BY: APP**

**ISLAMABAD:** Federal Minister for Communications Abdul Aleem Khan on Friday visited the Turkish Embassy to express profound grief and offer condolences over the tragic school

During the visit, the minister met with Turkish Ambassador Dr. Irfan Neziroglu and conveyed that the entire Pakistani nation stands in unwavering solidarity with their Turkish brothers in this hour of immense sorrow. He described

During the conversation, Abdul Aleem Khan emphasized that addressing psychological issues and implementing measures to prevent gun violence must be a collective priority. Both leaders reached a consensus that a strong and stable family system plays a vital role in preventing such tragic occurrences in society.



shooting incidents in the Turkish provinces of Sanliurfa and Kahramanmaraş that claimed several lives.

the act of targeting innocent children as an extremely brutal and barbaric deed that defies humanity, said a press release.

The minister further remarked that Türkiye and Pakistan are like "one soul in two bodies," sharing each other's joys and sorrows as inseparable partners. He offered special prayers for the deceased, requesting that Allah Almighty grant the bereaved families courage and patience, and wished for the swift and complete recovery of those injured in the incidents. On the occasion, Ambassador Dr. Irfan Neziroglu thanked the minister for his visit and appreciated the solidarity extended by the people of Pakistan. The two sides also exchanged views on the prevailing regional situation and common challenges faced by both countries.

# Illegal Market on Empire Road taken into Govt Custody

**TIMES REPORT**

**PESHAWAR:** A market consisting of 22 shops and upper rooms, established on Empire Road by Mukhtiar Ahmad Usmani, had remained under illegal use for a long period despite its lease having expired nearly 30 years ago.

Despite the expiration of the lease, commercial activities continued at the site and the government property remained unlawfully occupied.

The matter was contested in various courts, where the concerned party pursued legal battles in the Civil Court, Sessions Court, High Court, and eventually the Supreme Court. However, at every stage, the

courts delivered decisions in accordance with legal requirements.

Subsequently, the C&W



Department and the district administration carried out a joint operation in line with government directives and initiated action to take the market into official custody. During this process, the case was once again taken to the Supreme

Court, which issued a clear ruling directing the concerned individuals to relocate their businesses elsewhere and hand over the market to the relevant department.

Following the Supreme Court's decision, the district administration and concerned authorities fulfilled all legal requirements and began implementation. This move is being regarded as a significant step towards reclaiming government property and upholding the rule of law.

Chief Coordinator of the All Pakistan Employees Confederation, General Habibullah Khan Umarzai, appreciated the efforts of the district administration, the

# Revision demanded to end salary disparity for Project Employees in KP

**TIMES REPORT**

**PESHAWAR:** In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, a significant disparity has emerged between provincial and federal salary packages for project employees, as the provincial package has not been revised for the past four years. This situation has raised serious concerns among employees.

According to official documents, the federal government issued a notification on March 5, 2026, introducing new standardized pay packages for project employees, which will come into effect from July 1, 2026. In contrast, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa continues to follow the 2022 pay package, with no revisions or increases to date.

A comparative analysis

reveals a substantial gap across all PPS scales. In lower grades, the difference amounts to several thousand rupees, while in higher grades it ranges from over Rs. 100,000 to as much as Rs. 450,000.

For instance, in PPS-1 (BPS 1-4), the federal minimum salary is set at Rs. 37,800, whereas in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa it remains Rs. 25,000 — a difference of Rs. 12,800. Similarly, in PPS-6 (BPS 16), the federal salary stands at Rs. 141,750 compared to Rs. 75,000 in the province, reflecting a gap of Rs. 66,750.

The disparity widens further in higher scales. In PPS-8 (BPS 18), the federal salary is Rs. 295,320, while the provincial figure is Rs. 150,000 — a difference of Rs. 145,320. Likewise, in

PPS-12 (BPS 22), the federal package has reached up to Rs. 1,050,000, whereas in the province it is around Rs. 600,000, showing a substantial gap of Rs. 450,000.

Employees argue that over the past five years, project employees at the federal level and in other provinces have received salary increases twice, while no such progress has been made in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

In light of this situation, employees have urged the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the Chief Secretary to immediately review the pay package for project employees and align it with the federal government's 2026 notification to ensure equitable and fair treatment for provincial employees.

# Officials asked to assist public amid rain-related losses

**TIMES REPORT**

**PESHAWAR:** On the directives of Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundli, Chairman Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Farzand Ali Wazir has instructed district secretaries across the



province to provide maximum assistance to the public affected by recent rains.

In a statement issued on Friday, he said PRCS teams must reach affected communities in all districts and respond promptly to any emergency situations caused by rain-related incidents.

He also urged the public to strictly follow precautionary measures to avoid flooding and overflow of rivers and canals, stressing that human life is of utmost importance.

Farzand Ali Wazir further said that residents of remote areas, especially those in low-lying settlements and slums, should remain highly cautious as minor negligence can lead to major losses, particularly for children, women, and the elderly.

He added that PRCS teams are present across the province and citizens should immediately report any emergency situation through available communication channels without delay.

From high-impact scientific sessions to engaging panel discussions and fast-paced rapid-fire presentations, the event is designed to

# ICHR-26 Kicks Off in Peshawar with Focus on Practical Healthcare Solutions

**SHAHZAD RASHEED**

**PESHAWAR:** A major push towards bridging the gap between research and real-world healthcare took center stage as the three-day International Conference of Health Research (ICHR-26) commenced at Rehman Medical Institute, organized under RMI Education.

The event was also graced by the presence of Founder and Chairman RMI, Prof. Dr. Muhammad Rehman, adding further significance to the occasion.

The conference, bringing together leading minds from across Pakistan and beyond, aims to transform healthcare research into practical solutions that can directly influence policy and improve patient care. Provincial Health Minister Mian Khaliq ur

Rehman inaugurated the event as chief guest.

With over 200 participants — including renowned researchers,



clinicians, academicians, and students — the conference quickly turned into a vibrant hub of ideas, innovation, and collaboration. International experts also joined virtually, adding a global dimension to the discussions.

challenge conventional thinking and highlight actionable research. Undergraduate poster competitions further showcased emerging talent, reflecting the growing research culture among young professionals.

# Thermal Fogging Drive launched against Dengue

**OUR CORRESPONDENT**

**BANNU:** On the direction of Deputy Commissioner Bannu Muhammad Fahim, the Health Department Bannu has initiated a thermal fogging campaign across Bannu city this evening to curb the spread of dengue, in collaboration with the Water and Sanitation Services Bannu (WSSB).

The drive is being carried out in the supervision of District administration Officers and focal person for dengue, malaria and leishmania Ansarullah of the District Health Office Bannu, aimed at eliminating adult mosquitoes and halting disease transmission. The activity is being conducted in the wider public interest and will continue until the entire city is covered. As part of technical support, the Health Department has provided chemicals and vehicle-mounted fogger machines for spraying in accordance with World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines for anti-dengue measures.

# Tank police bust drugs network, seize over 5.9 kg hashish

**BY: APP**

**TANK:** The Tank police have carried out a major crackdown on drug trafficking, seizing over 5.9 kilograms of hashish and arresting two suspects, including a woman, along with another individual held for illegal possession of weapons.

According to police spokesman, the Tank police, led by District Police Officer Abdul Samad Khan, have adopted a zero-tolerance policy against narcotics to eliminate drug-related activities from the district. Acting on a tip-off during police duty, a police team led by DSP City Imran Khattak and SHO City Police Station Sher Afzal Khan Kundi set up a checkpoint on Station Road. During the operation, the police apprehended Khan Muhammad, son of Haibat Khan, a resident of Kirri Ahmad Shah, and recovered 1.87 grams of hashish from his possession. In a separate search conducted by a lady constable, 4,765 grams of hashish packed in four packets were recovered from a female suspect, identified as Sherina Bibi, wife of Naeem Khan, a resident of Mohallah Sheikhawala. Both suspects were arrested on the spot and shifted to the police station. The police have registered separate cases against them. In another action, the police arrested a suspect identified as Riaz, son of Mumtaz, a resident of Ali Khel, and recovered a pistol along with five rounds of ammunition from his possession.

DPO Abdul Samad Khan appreciated the performance of the police team and directed officials to further intensify operations against drug dealers and criminal elements to rid society of this menace.

# Pakistan Ulema Council welcomes Lebanon ceasefire, lauds Army Chief Asim Munir's diplomatic efforts

**TIMES REPORT**

**ISLAMABAD:** The Pakistan Ulema Council on Friday welcomed the ceasefire in Lebanon and appreciated the diplomatic efforts for de-escalation in the region.

In a joint statement, the council's central chairman Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi, along with senior leaders including Asad Zakaria Qasmi, Nauman Hashir, Muhammad Shafi Qasmi, Maqbool Ahmed, Tahir ul Hassan, Tahir Aqeel Awan and Aziz Akbar Qasmi, commended the role



of Chief of Army Staff and Chief of Defence Forces Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir and President of the United States Donald Trump in efforts leading to the ceasefire. They appreciate the initiatives undertaken by Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir to promote peace and stability, particularly his efforts for reducing tensions between Iran and the United States, as well as supporting a ceasefire in Lebanon.

They said these efforts reflect Pakistan's commitment to regional peace and the unity of the Muslim Ummah. They termed the initiatives as significant contributions toward addressing the challenges faced by the Muslim world.

The religious leaders emphasized that efforts fostering unity, resolving conflicts, and alleviating the difficulties of Muslims globally are commendable and deserve recognition across the Islamic world.

# HEC empowers around 50,000 financially disadvantaged students through scholarship programme

**BY: APP**

**ISLAMABAD:** In addition to its merit-based local and foreign scholarship initiatives, the Higher Education Commission (HEC) Pakistan has been awarding higher education opportunities to financially challenged Pakistani students under its Need-Based Scholarship Programme since 2012. As many as 46,824 needy and deserving students from different parts of the country have so far availed the opportunity to study at various levels in participating public sector universities, said a press release on Friday. Expanding access to higher education for financially disadvantaged undergraduate students, the initiative provides full tuition coverage and a monthly stipend. Students are selected based on demonstrated financial need, as assessed by the Institutional Scholarship Award Committees (ISACs) at participating universities, and the scholarship funds are disbursed from HEC's recurring grant allocations to the universities. In 2024-25 alone, HEC awarded 3,946 scholarships under the Need-Based Scholarship Programme. The programme empowers disadvantaged youth and promotes quality education, gender equality, reduced inequalities, and sustainable economic growth across Pakistan. The programme aims to elevate the socio-economic status of the students through provision of high-quality education and, thus, higher career opportunities.

# Editorial & Opinion

The Voice of the Time  
**DAILY TIMES**

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## Where Nations Rise

### Inverting in People Where it Truly Matters

LATIF UR REHMAN

The latest report by the World Bank, Building Human Capital Where It Matters: Homes, Neighborhoods, and Workplaces, serves as both a diagnosis and a call to action. It reminds us that the true wealth of nations lies not in natural resources, but in their people. At a time when the global economy stands at a crossroads, the report offers a compelling narrative: that human capital—the health, knowledge, skills, and lived experiences of individuals—is the quiet engine of prosperity, yet one that is faltering across much of the developing world. Despite decades of progress in expanding access to education and healthcare, the report reveals a sobering reality. Across many low- and middle-income countries, human capital outcomes have stagnated and in some cases, even regressed. Children today, in numerous parts of the world, struggle more with basic reading and mathematics than their counterparts did fifteen years ago. Indicators of health, such as average adult height, have declined in several regions, while the promise of meaningful employment remains elusive for millions, particularly women and youth. This stagnation is not merely a statistical concern; it is a quiet erosion of potential. The report underscores that disparities in human capital account for nearly two-thirds of the income gap between rich and poor nations, making it one of the most decisive forces shaping global inequality and economic destiny.

Yet, beyond the diagnosis, the report introduces a transformative way of thinking—one that shifts the lens from traditional sectors and age groups to the lived environments where human potential is truly forged. It argues that human capital is not built in isolation within classrooms or clinics alone, but rather takes shape in the intimate spaces of homes, the shared fabric of neighborhoods, and the dynamic rhythms of workplaces. Within the home, the earliest chapters of human development are written. It is here that nutrition, care, and emotional support weave the foundation for lifelong learning and well-being. The report highlights that disparities in cognitive and social development emerge long before children step into formal education, often shaped by the resources and care environments provided within families. Even more striking is the insight that maternal resources alone cannot compensate for a lack of nurturing care, underscoring the profound importance of parental engagement and early childhood stimulation. Beyond the household, neighborhoods emerge as powerful yet often overlooked arenas of opportunity—or constraint. The quality of local schools, access to healthcare, environmental conditions, and even exposure to violence collectively shape the trajectories of individuals. Two children from similar economic backgrounds may walk vastly different life paths depending on the neighborhoods they grow up in. In some contexts, growing up in a more prosperous and secure neighborhood can double future earnings and significantly improve educational attainment, revealing how geography quietly scripts destiny.

The workplace, too, is reimagined not merely as a destination for employment but as a vital arena for continuous learning. Contrary to conventional thinking, the report finds that nearly half of an individual's human capital is accumulated through work itself. Yet, for the majority of workers in developing economies—many of whom are engaged in small-scale agriculture, informal employment, or microenterprises—opportunities for skill development remain scarce. The consequence is a cycle where experience does not translate into meaningful productivity gains or higher earnings, leaving workers trapped in low-return activities. In response to these intertwined challenges, the report advocates for a coherent and integrated policy approach—one that recognizes the interconnectedness of these settings. It calls for investments that simultaneously strengthen families through income support and parenting programs, revitalize neighborhoods through better services and infrastructure, and transform workplaces into engines of learning through training, apprenticeships, and inclusive labor market reforms. Crucially, the report emphasizes that fragmented interventions are no longer sufficient. Instead, it envisions a future where policies are aligned across sectors and settings, supported by robust data systems and coordinated institutional frameworks. Tools such as social registries and integrated service delivery platforms are highlighted as pathways to ensure that support reaches individuals and households in a holistic manner, addressing the multiple constraints they face simultaneously. As its heart, this report is a reaffirmation of a timeless truth: that development is, above all, a human story. It is about the child nurtured in a caring home, the youth inspired by a supportive community, and the worker empowered by meaningful opportunities. As the world confronts the challenges of demographic change, technological disruption, and climate uncertainty, the message resonates with clarity—investing in people is not merely an option; it is the foundation upon which resilient and prosperous societies are built. In illuminating where and how human capital truly takes shape, the World Bank offers not just a framework for policy, but a vision—one that calls on nations to rediscover the power of investing in their people, where it matters most.

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## Trump May Fly to Islamabad to Seal Iran Deal



JUNAID QAISER

When U.S. President Donald Trump publicly floated the idea of flying to Islamabad to personally seal a deal with Iran, it was not just a headline-grabbing remark—it was a reflection of how far the diplomatic process has come, and how much is now riding on it. Speaking with unusual optimism, Trump suggested that Iran has "agreed to almost everything" and indicated that if an agreement is finalized in Pakistan's capital, he would consider being there himself to close it.

This possibility, which once seemed far-fetched, is now at the heart of a swiftly changing diplomatic landscape. A sitting U.S. president making a trip to Pakistan to finalize peace with Iran would represent a monumental shift—not just in U.S.-Iran

relations, but also in how Pakistan is viewed on the world stage. Islamabad has transformed from merely a location into the epicenter of crucial diplomatic negotiations.

From the perspective of Washington, the mission is straightforward and unwavering: Iran must never develop a nuclear weapon. Trump's statements reinforce this priority, framing any possible agreement around dismantling Tehran's nuclear aspirations.

What really stands out is not just the strength of this position, but the confidence with which it's being articulated now. The administration seems to believe that a blend of pressure and negotiation has brought Iran closer to a consensus than it has been in the past.

pressure has been quite significant. The U.S. blockade targeting Iranian oil exports and maritime routes has transformed the economic situation, tightening the grip on Tehran and raising the stakes of continuing the conflict. At the same time, the diplomatic path—centered in Islamabad—has remained open, creating a dual approach of both pressure and engagement.

The first round of talks in Islamabad, though inconclusive, laid the groundwork for this moment. Over 21 hours of discussions, both sides clarified their positions and tested the limits of compromise. No deal emerged, but the process did not collapse. Instead, it produced something

equally valuable: a clearer understanding of what a final agreement would require.

Now, a second round is expected within days, with Islamabad once again at the center. The urgency is palpable. The ceasefire remains fragile, and both sides understand that time is not a neutral factor—it either accelerates diplomacy or invites escalation.

At the heart of this process is Pakistan's increasingly assertive role. Field Marshal Asim Munir's recent engagements in Tehran highlight the intensity of behind-the-scenes efforts to bridge gaps and sustain momentum. His meetings with Iran's top political and military leadership signal a hands-on approach, one that goes beyond facilitation and into active mediation.

Alongside this, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has expanded the diplomatic front, engaging regional leaders from Riyadh to Doha, aligning broader support for de-escalation. This combination of military-to-military engagement and political outreach has given Pakistan a unique leverage—access to both Washington and Tehran, and credibility with regional stakeholders.

It is this credibility that has earned Islamabad rare public endorsement from the United States. The White House has already described Pakistan as a trusted and effective mediator, and Trump himself has gone further—personally praising Pakistan's leadership and hinting

that their role could culminate in a deal-signing moment of global significance.

Still, beneath the optimism lies a degree of uncertainty. Trump's claim that Iran has agreed to "almost everything" remains unverified, and past negotiations have shown how quickly progress can stall.

The internal dynamics in Tehran, particularly the need for approval from higher leadership, continue to complicate the path forward.

Yet diplomacy often advances in precisely these uncertain spaces. It is built on signals, gestures, and incremental trust. Trump's willingness to travel to Islamabad—conditional as it may be—is one such signal. It suggests that Washington sees a real possibility of success, not just a theoretical one.

If that possibility materializes, Islamabad will not just host history—it will help shape it. A deal signed there, potentially with the U.S. president in attendance, would redefine Pakistan's diplomatic standing and underscore its emergence as a critical bridge between adversaries.

For now, the moment remains poised between anticipation and outcome. The talks may resume within days. The deal may or may not follow. But one thing is certain: the center of gravity has shifted.

The world is watching, and for the first time in a generation, all roads lead to Pakistan.

## Return of Afghan Refugees from Pakistan



MUSAWAR QURESHI

The process of repatriation (return) of Afghan refugees from Pakistan has accelerated over the past few years. This is an issue that has significantly impacted not only Pakistan's economy but also its foreign policy, internal security, and social cohesion. For more than four decades, Pakistan hosted millions of Afghan refugees—an act widely recognized globally as a major humanitarian contribution. However, changing regional dynamics and internal challenges have now made refugee repatriation a key component of national policy.

The arrival of Afghan refugees in Pakistan began in 1979 following the outbreak of war in Afghanistan. At that time, millions of Afghans crossed the border into Pakistan, and their numbers continued to grow over the years. Despite limited economic

resources, Pakistan provided them with shelter, education, and employment opportunities for decades. In recent years, under government policy, the repatriation of undocumented and illegal refugees has intensified. According to reports by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, since 2023 more than 2 million Afghan nationals have returned to Afghanistan from Pakistan, while nearly 1 million were repatriated during 2025 alone. These figures indicate that Pakistan is currently undergoing one of the largest refugee return processes in its history. The effects of Afghan refugee repatriation cannot be viewed from a single perspective, as both positive and negative aspects exist.

One of the most significant benefits is the reduction of pressure on resources. For decades, sectors such as healthcare, education, water, and other basic services have been under strain. A decrease in refugee population is likely to ease this burden. Additionally, issues such as the informal economy, smuggling, and undocumented labor may also decline. There is also an expectation that employment opportunities for local workers may increase in certain sectors.

On the other hand, Afghan refugees have been an important part of Pakistan's informal economy. Their presence has been notable in construction, transport, agriculture, and small businesses. Their sudden departure may slow economic activity in certain areas. The rental market and

property sector may also be affected, particularly in regions where a large number of Afghan refugees resided. Border trade, which has been a key economic driver for several cities, may also experience temporary decline. Pakistan's Afghan policy has always been based on a balance between security concerns and diplomatic considerations. If peace and stability improve in Afghanistan and cross-border terrorism declines, there may be room for partial policy relaxation in the future. Measures such as legal visa frameworks, trade facilitation, and temporary residency options could emerge as part of such flexibility. However, if security concerns persist or illegal activities increase, stricter policies are likely to remain in place. In this regard, Pakistan must prioritize internal security, as national security is a fundamental responsibility of any state.

Another important dimension of this issue relates to Pakistan's internal environment. Certain groups—whether driven by political, economic, or social interests—sometimes attempt to influence public opinion through irresponsible statements or misinformation. Such actions can harm national unity and hinder the country's progress. It is a reality that national unity and collective thinking are essential for a country's development. While differences of opinion are a natural part of democratic societies, narratives that go against national interests or create division can be harmful to the state.

Therefore, it is crucial that all segments of society, particularly the media and opinion-makers, act responsibly.

The repatriation of Afghan refugees is not merely a domestic issue for Pakistan; it also carries regional implications. Economic conditions, employment opportunities, and security in Afghanistan will determine whether returning refugees can sustainably resettle there. If Afghanistan fails to achieve economic stability, the risk of renewed migration may arise.

For this reason, Pakistan must maintain balanced diplomatic and trade relations with Afghanistan. Alternative border trade systems, proper documentation mechanisms, and joint economic initiatives can prove beneficial for both countries.

In conclusion, the return of Afghan refugees from Pakistan is a complex and sensitive process that must be viewed not only through a security lens but also from economic, social, and humanitarian perspectives. If managed with proper planning, transparency, and respect for human dignity, Pakistan can turn this challenge into an opportunity. Conversely, if the process is handled hastily or without a sound strategy, its negative consequences could affect not only Pakistan but the entire region. The need of the hour is for Pakistan to adopt a balanced, wise, and long-term approach one that ensures harmony between national security, economic stability, and human values.

## Digital Sympathy vs Real Silence



FIZZA QAISAR

In an age defined by hyperconnectivity, tragedy no longer unfolds in silence. It arrives on our screens, instant and unfiltered, only to be rapidly reframed, reposted, and reduced to a sequence of reactions. Timelines flood with black screens, solemn captions, and carefully chosen words of solidarity. And then, almost as swiftly, the attention shifts. The cycle continues.

What appears, at first glance, to be collective empathy raises a more disquieting question: are we genuinely standing with one another, or have we simply learned to simulate concern?

Empathy, in the digital era, has undergone a subtle yet profound transformation. It has become aestheticized, curated for visibility and shaped for public consumption. Expressions of grief and solidarity are no longer confined to private spaces; they are performed in front of an audience, measured in

engagement, and validated through visibility. In this environment, the line between sincerity and performance becomes increasingly indistinct.

After every tragedy, social media platforms are saturated with gestures of support. Yet beyond the screen, a different reality persists. The individual at the center of loss often confronts a far more enduring companion: silence. Not the silence of peace, but the kind that lingers, stretches, and weighs heavily in the absence of meaningful human presence. It is within this silence that digital sympathy rarely reaches.

The convenience of online expression has redefined our understanding of empathy. A message can be composed in seconds. A post can signal alignment without requiring engagement. There is no expectation of continuity, no demand for sustained presence. One can appear attentive without ever becoming involved.

This frictionless form of empathy allows participation without consequence. It creates the impression of connection while preserving emotional distance. And perhaps this is precisely why it has become so pervasive.

To be present in the physical world, by contrast, demands something far more complex. It requires time, patience, and a willingness to confront discomfort. It involves sitting with grief that cannot be resolved, offering support without the assurance of impact, and remaining present even when there is nothing left to say. Such acts resist simplification; they cannot be condensed into a caption or captured within a fleeting story.

In many ways, our digital habits have conditioned us to avoid precisely this kind of engagement. We have grown accustomed to immediacy, to content that can be consumed and set aside. Discomfort can be muted, distress can be scrolled past, and emotional exposure can be carefully regulated. Within this framework, even empathy is adapted to fit the logic of convenience.

As a result, we risk becoming observers rather than participants in one another's lives. We document suffering, circulate it, and respond to it, yet rarely do we inhabit it in a way that transforms understanding into action. The distance between witnessing and feeling has expanded, even as the tools for connection have multiplied.

This is not to suggest that expressions of digital solidarity are inherently insincere. For many, they represent a genuine, if limited, attempt to acknowledge pain and signal awareness. However, when such expressions become substitutes for meaningful engagement rather than complements to it, they begin to hollow out the very concept of empathy.

The distinction is subtle but significant. To acknowledge suffering is not the same as to accompany it. To express concern is not the same as to share the burden of it. One can be visible without being present.

At its core, empathy is neither performative nor declarative. It does not rely on visibility for its validity. It is often quiet, marked by consistency rather than intensity. It manifests in sustained attention, in the willingness to remain when circumstances offer no resolution,

and in the capacity to endure discomfort without retreat.

Yet these are precisely the qualities that resist the logic of the digital sphere, where attention is transient and presence is easily simulated.

The challenge, then, is not simply to critique the culture of digital sympathy, but to confront the deeper question it reflects. Have we, in our pursuit of convenience, redefined empathy into something that demands less of us? Have we allowed the ease of expression to replace the difficulty of presence? If so, the consequences extend beyond individual interactions. A society that grows accustomed to simulated concern risks eroding the foundations of collective responsibility. When empathy becomes a gesture rather than a practice, its capacity to sustain human connection diminishes.

Ultimately, pain does not seek amplification; it seeks acknowledgment. It does not require visibility so much as it requires presence. And presence, in its truest form, cannot be outsourced to a platform or condensed into a performance.

The question we are left with is neither abstract nor rhetorical. It is immediate and deeply personal. In moments of another's suffering, do we choose the ease of appearing or the difficulty of being there?

The answer to that question will determine whether we remain a society that merely observes or one that still knows how to stand, quietly and consistently, beside those who need it most.

Fizza Qaisar is a journalist who writes about social issues and human struggles.

### NARC readies high-yielding Lentil-24 for next growing season: Wealth Pakistan



# BUSINESS

## Pakistan, Saudi Arabia sign \$3 billion deposit extension agreement

WASHINGTON DC: Pakistan and Saudi Arabia have signed Saudi Deposit Extension Agreement during a ceremony in Washington.

Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb witnessed the signing of the important financial agreement in Washington, D.C., in the presence of the Ambassador of Pakistan to the United States, on the sidelines of the World Bank-IMF Spring Meetings 2026.

The agreement, signed between the Saudi Fund for Development (SFD) and the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), provides for the extension in the maturity of a US\$3 billion deposit placed by SFD with the State Bank of Pakistan.

The agreement was signed by Sultan bin Abdulrahman Al-Marshad, Chief Executive Officer of the Saudi Fund for Development, on behalf of SFD, and Jameel Ahmad, Governor of the State Bank of Pakistan, on behalf of the SBP.

The extension of the deposit reflects the strong and longstanding economic partnership between Pakistan and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and will further support Pakistan's external sector stability.

Government of Pakistan (@Financegovpk) April 17, 2026 Pakistan appreciates



presence of the... pic.twitter.com/zBCoAWPH NL — Ministry of Finance,

Government of Pakistan (@Financegovpk) April 17, 2026 Pakistan appreciates

Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb also held a productive meeting with Dr Pan Gongsheng, President of the People's Bank of China (PBOC) in Washington.

During the meeting, the Finance Minister expressed appreciation for China's continued support for Pakistan at the International Monetary Fund (IMF), particularly within the IMF Executive Board.

The Finance Minister also provided an update on Pakistan's plans for its inaugural Panda Bond issuance and requested expedited approval from the National Association of Financial Institutional Investors (NAFMI).

He further apprised the PBOC President that Pakistan has recently met its Eurobond repayment obligations and has received additional financial support from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Aurangzeb highlighted the immediate economic impact of the ongoing regional conflict, noting that the government has activated targeted subsidies and demand management measures to mitigate its effects.

Finance Minister Witnessed Signing of Saudi Deposit Extension Agreement with State Bank of Pakistan

Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, witnessed the

## BoK Inaugurates New Branch on PIA Road, Expands Presence in Lahore

TIMES REPORT

LAHORE: Bank of Khyber has inaugurated its new branch on PIA Road, Lahore, further strengthening its presence in one of the country's key commercial hubs. The branch was formally inaugurated by Hassan Raza, Managing Director & CEO BoK, along with Fawad Saddozai, Group

Banking along Regional Heads in the presence of Area Manager and Branch Managers from across Lahore. Speaking on the occasion, the MD & CEO highlighted the Bank's continued focus on expansion and customer-centric service delivery, emphasizing that the new branch will enhance accessibility and provide con-

of Khyber now operates 13 branches in Lahore, reflecting its growing footprint in the city. The new branch will offer a comprehensive range of Shariah-compliant financial solutions, along with digital banking solutions including a state-of-the-art mobile application and an extensive Mastercard cards



Head RAM, Gul Buhar Khan, Group Head Retail, Asif Shahzad, Head Transactional

venient, efficient banking solutions to customers in the area. With this addition, the Bank

range, reaffirming the Bank's commitment to innovation and service excellence.

## SCCI concerned over closure of the CNG sector, and condition of NOC, imposed on Hajj and Umrah operators

TIMES REPORT

PESHAWAR: Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry expressed serious concern over closure of CNG stations, describing it as a completely unconstitutional act and urged the provincial government to take notice to protect and prevent the CNG sector from major disaster.

SCCI strongly opposed the provincial government's new policy for making mandatory NOC by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Culture and Tourism Authority from the police department for Hajj and Umrah operators, calling it an anti-business step, which must be withdrawn immediately.

According to details, a special joint meeting/gathering

in honour of the All Pakistan CNG Association Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chapter and



Hajj and Umrah Association, was arranged by Businessman Forum under chairmanship of the SCCI president Junaid Altaf here at the chamber house on Friday. The APCNGA delega-

tion was headed by its Chairman Pervez Khan Khattak while Hajj and Umrah



Association was representing SCCI Standing Committee on Hajj and Umrah Ghazanfar Savul. Apart from senior office bearers and members of the CNG Association, former pres-

ident FPCCI and Businessman Forum Leader Ghazanfar Bilour, the chamber's senior vice president Muhammad Nadeem, vice president former presidents Fazal Moqeem Khan, Hasnain Khurshid, Faiz Muhammad Faizi, former senior vice president Shahid Hussain and former vice presidents Javed Akhtar and Malik Niazi Awan, All Pakistan Car Dealers Association Chairman Bakht Mir Jan Durrani, Malik Niazi Awan, members of the executive committee Aftab Iqbal and Shamsur Rahim, Abdul Majid, Muhammad Imran Zeb, Kamran Zeb, Fazl e Wahid, Saddam Gul, members and senior office bearers associated with CNG and Hajj and Umrah sector were present on the occasion.

## CEO KPEZDMC visits HEZ, conducts assessment to fire incident

OUR CORRESPONDENT

HARIPUR: A tragic incident occurred on 16th April 2026 due to a gas pipeline blast caused by pressure, followed by a subsequent fire near Hattar Economic Zone (HEZ). It is important to note that the affected pipeline was neither within the HEZ boundary nor supplying gas to the HEZ.

The incident damaged the 132 kV transmission line serving the Hattar SEZ 40 MW grid station. Six conductors, each approximately 230 Cameters in length, were severely damaged.

Immediately following

the incident, teams from KPEZDMC, the Deputy



Commissioner (DC), Assistant Commissioners (ACs), and Rescue 1122 reached the site and actively supported rescue

and relief operations. Senior management from



KPEZDMC Head Office also arrived promptly on the instructions of the CEO to oversee the situation. On the 17th April, CEO

KPEZDMC Mr. Shaharyar Gul, accompanied by KPEZDMC Board of Directors members Mr. Safer Akhtar and Mr. Najjullah Khattak, visited the site to review progress on the rehabilitation of the transmission line. During the visit, the CEO met with the XEN HAZECO on-site and directed that restoration work on the 132 kV line be expedited to ensure the early restoration of power supply to Hattar SEZ.

The delegation also visited Qarshi Industries to acknowledge and appreciate the management's support during the emergency.

# The Diplomatic Dividend: Pakistan's Pivot to Prosperity

## Converting Global Trust into Economic Growth



MUHAMMAD ANWAR

For decades, Pakistan's geographic location was often described as a strategic burden, a frontline state perpetually caught in the crossfire of Great Power rivalries. However, as we navigate the second quarter of 2026, a profound shift is occurring. The narrative of a nation defined solely by its security challenges is being replaced by that of a "Strategic Anchor." Today, Pakistan is attempting a masterclass in modern statecraft: converting its hard-earned "Diplomatic Utility" into long-term "Economic Stability."

The foundation of this "Diplomatic Dividend" lies in Pakistan's unique ability to maintain trust across traditionally antagonistic corridors. In a world fractured by "with-us-or-against-us" mentalities, Islamabad has emerged as a rare Strategic Bridge. As of April 2026, Pakistan sits at a unique diplomatic junction. The leadership has managed to maintain a "trustworthy" status with the United States and the EU while simultaneously deepening its "Iron-Clad" bond with China. Most notably, the "Islamabad Peace Talks" held on April 11-12, 2026, positioned Pakistan as the primary channel for de-escalation between Washington and Tehran.

through global capitals, President Trump has signaled a potential visit to Islamabad for a historic Second Round of Dialogue with Iran. This "Shuttle Diplomacy" has turned the federal capital into a global fortress; as of this week, security arrangements in Islamabad are at a peak alert, with high-ranking delegates and advanced security teams already arriving. This visit represents a definitive signal that Islamabad is now the indispensable capital where global rivals find common ground.

While high-stakes politics dominate the headlines, a secondary engine of growth is warming up. The High-Level EU-Pakistan Business Forum (EU-PKBF) is scheduled for April 28-29, 2026, in Islamabad. This is not a mere diplomatic courtesy; it is a massive B2B engine featuring institutional investors and policymakers from across the European continent. With total bilateral trade already hitting approximately €12 billion in 2025, the forum aims to secure the future of the GSP Plus scheme. This vital pillar allows 86% of Pakistan's exports to enter the EU duty-free, a "peace dividend" that contributed to export earnings of \$5,436 billion in just the first seven months of this fiscal year. By showcasing "Green Competitiveness," Pakistan is moving from being a recipient of aid to a reliable partner in the EU's Global Gateway strategy.

The recent conflict in the Gulf has further accelerated this economic pivot. The UAE, historically the region's safe haven, suffered significant shocks during the 40-day conflict earlier this year. While the UAE remains a powerhouse, the exodus of foreign investors and the disruption of the Strait of Hormuz, which saw maritime insurance premiums spike, have taught the global market a lesson in geographic risk. Pakistan stands as the natural beneficiary of this "de-risking" strategy. We are witnessing a Redirection of Capital where Gulf-based investors are looking for "vulnerability-free" assets. In April 2026, the logic is simple: If the Gulf is the region's

capital, Pakistan must be its Food Basket and Logistics Hub. The recent \$3 billion fresh deposit from Saudi Arabia and the extension of a \$5 billion facility through 2028 are strategic anchors. Coupled with the joint venture between DP World and Pakistan's National Logistics Cell (NLC), the infrastructure for this "Bridge Economy" is already being built.

While the political doors are open, the commercial competitive pressure is fierce. The IMF's World Economic Outlook (April 2026) projects Pakistan's GDP to grow by 3.6%, with inflation

Pakistan must upgrade its industrial DNA. This is where initiatives like Digital Compliance Gateways become vital. By providing data-driven transparency, we allow our agricultural exporters and textile SMEs to prove their sustainability to skeptical international buyers.

Perhaps the most human indicator of this success is the power of our travel document. For the first time in years, the Henley Passport Index 2026 shows a sustained positive trend. In February, the Pakistani passport rose to 97th place, marking a six-place jump from its

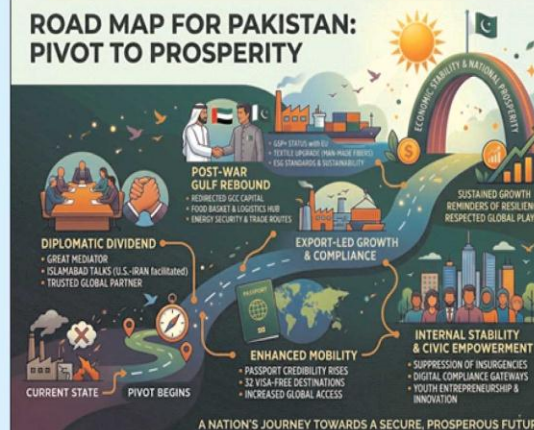
2025 ranking of 103rd. Pakistani citizens now enjoy visa-free or visa-on-arrival access to 32 destinations, including Qatar, Maldives, and recently reinstated access to The Gambia. This is a "lagging indicator": as the world trusts our state to mediate wars and host Presidents, it begins to trust our people to cross borders.

Beyond the cold numbers of the IMF, this pivot is about the collective resilience of our people. As a nation of 245 million, our greatest export is our endurance and adaptability. The "Diplomatic Dividend" gives us the breathing room to fix our internal systems, to move from an "informal" economy to a "digitally compliant" one. When a foreign investor looks at Pakistan today, they don't just see a nuclear state; they see a market of millions of determined individuals ready to engage with the modern world.

The path to prosperity remains paved with risks. Energy constraints remain a bottleneck for industrial growth, with load shedding still impacting production cycles. Diplomacy can host the U.S. President, but we must fix our domestic power grid to keep the factories running. To convert this "Diplomatic Utility" into "Permanent Stability," domestic reforms must be as relentless as our foreign policy.

Pakistan's journey from 2024 to 2026 has been one of survival and strategic repositioning. We have moved from a nation seeking "bailouts" to a nation offering "solutions." Whether it is mediating a Middle East crisis, hosting a world leader for peace talks, or providing a digital workforce for Europe, Pakistan has proven its value. The Diplomatic Dividend is now on the table. The EU Business Forum at the end of this month is our stage. The world is listening, the doors are open, and the Pivot to Prosperity has officially begun. It is time for Pakistan to stop being the world's "problem" and start being the world's "partner."

Muhammad Anwar is a development professional and CEO of Freedom Gate Prosperity with over three decades of experience in governance and civic engagement. He is a regular writer on public policy and social issues, and a social entrepreneur committed to peace, democratic values, and sustainable development in Pakistan.



# SPORTS



## Faheem Ashraf hits back at Hafeez over PSL criticism

## Salman Agha hints at possible break from T20I cricket

BY: WEB DESK

KARACHI: Karachi Kings all-rounder Salman Agha has indicated that he may consider stepping away from T20 international cricket in order to manage his workload and better prepare for the upcoming ICC Men's ODI World Cup 2027.

Speaking during a recent media conference, Agha openly reflected on his recent form in both the Pakistan Super League (PSL) and international cricket, admitting that he has been evaluating his long-term preparation strategy.

The right-handed batter said he is carefully assessing his commitments across formats as he looks to peak at key global events, suggesting that adjustments to his T20 schedule could be on the table if it benefits his overall performance.

"There is a lot of concern. I keep thinking my World Cup is not going well and my PSL is also not going well. The World Cup 2017 is still far away, and as mentioned, we will focus on that. We don't even have T20s this year; there are no T20s till December," Agha said.

He added that his post-PSL focus would likely shift towards the longer formats of the game, while leaving the door open for a possible T20I

definitely do it," he added.

Agha further stressed the importance of the 50-over World Cup in his career ambitions, saying he is willing to

form well," he stated.

The 2027 ICC Men's Cricket World Cup is set to be co-hosted by South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Namibia in October and November.

The tournament will feature 14 teams, with 44 matches in South Africa and 10 across Zimbabwe and Namibia. Australia will enter as the defending champions.

The 32-year-old expressed his views on the role of the PSL in shaping national team selections, stating that while the league is an important platform for identifying talent, directly promoting players to the Pakistan team based solely on PSL performances can be risky.

He suggested that a more structured pathway—moving from PSL to domestic cricket and then to international cricket—would better prepare players for the demands of the national side.

"I believe PSL performance should be used to identify players. New players should be recognised from here, then go into domestic cricket, perform there & only then make it to the Pakistan team," he said.

## Proposal to name Hayatabad Squash Court after Asif Shahab

TIMES REPORT

PESHAWAR: Following the sudden demise of senior bureaucrat and sports enthusiast Asif Shahab, sports circles have proposed naming the squash court at the Hayatabad Sports Complex after him in recognition of his services for the promotion of sports.

Asif Shahab suffered a fatal heart attack while playing squash at the Hayatabad Sports Complex and could not survive despite immediate medical attention. His passing has caused widespread grief in administrative and sports circles.

He was a Grade-19 senior officer and was serving as Project Director of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Human Capital Investment Project. He also previously served as Chief Planning Officer and was known for his contributions to development projects.

Sports stakeholders highlighted that Asif Shahab was not only a dedicated bureaucrat but also a strong supporter and promoter of sports activities. He played a key role in the development of the squash court at the Hayatabad Sports Complex. Former Director General Sports Junaid Khan supported the proposal, stating that naming the court after him would be a fitting tribute

to his contributions.

Sports figures have urged the Secretary Sports and Director General Sports to formally present



the proposal to the provincial cabinet for approval, ensuring official recognition of his services.

Asif Shahab hailed from Swabi, and his sudden death is being described as a major loss for both the administrative and sports sectors.

## PCB in talks with Cricket Australia over white-ball tour schedule

LAHORE: The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) is engaged in ongoing discussions with Cricket Australia over the scheduling of Australia's forthcoming white-ball tour to Pakistan, sources told Geo Super on Friday.

Pakistan are expected to host Australia for a three-match One Day International (ODI) series, with the touring side likely to arrive in the country towards the end of May.

According to sources, the matches are tentatively scheduled to take place between 31 May and 5 June. Under the proposed itinerary, one fixture will be staged in Rawalpindi, while the remaining two are expected to be held in Lahore.

Australia last visited Pakistan in January this year, featuring in a three-match Twenty20 International series.

Following the upcoming tour, they are set to travel to Bangladesh

for another white-ball assignment, with the first ODI scheduled for 9 June.

Meanwhile, Pakistan are also preparing for a tour of Bangladesh, where they are provisionally scheduled to play a two-match series from 8 to 20 May.

This will mark their first international assignment since hosting South Africa for a two-Test series in October last year.

Pakistan's most recent red-ball outing came against South Africa in October, with the two-match series ending in a 1-1 draw. The national side have not played any Test cricket since. As per the ICC Future Tours Programme (2023-27), Shan Masood's side are next scheduled to tour England for a three-match Test series from 19 August to 13 September. Prior to that, Pakistan are likely to travel to the West Indies for a two-Test series in July and August.

## Senior journalist felicitated on receiving lifetime membership from International Sports Association

TIMES REPORT

PESHAWAR: The office bearers of Abasin Columnists Association, a representative organization of prominent columnists and analysts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, organized a meeting to extend their heartfelt congratulations to Senior Sports Journalist, Amjad Aziz Malik on being awarded honorary lifetime membership of International Association of Sports Journalists (AIPS).

According to a press release issued here on Friday, the meeting was held under the chairmanship of Abasin

Columnists Association President, Zia-ul-Haq Sarhadi and attended by Senior Vice President Nayyar Sarhadi, Vice President Dr. Alamgir Afridi, General Secretary Abid Akhtar Hassan, Secretary Finance Waseem Shaidda, Joint Vice President Dr. Shaheen Umar, Joint Secretary Samina Qadir, Press Secretary Yasin Zahoor, Legal Advisor Sahibzada Talha Saad and Organizer Munawar Shah Munawar, Syeda Anam Sanaw Naqvi, Shayan.

In his congratulatory

message, the renowned columnist, Zia Sarhadi said that this wonderful achievement of Amjad Aziz Malik is a recognition of his personal hard work, professional skills and valuable services in the field of sports journalism, but it is also a great honor for the entire Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province and the country of Pakistan.

He said that receiving this honor at the AIPS Congress held in Lausanne, Switzerland is proof that Pakistani journalists are proving their capabilities at the global level. Zia-ul-Haq Sarhadi expressed the hope

that Amjad Aziz Malik will continue to bring glory to the country and nation with the same passion in the future and will continue to play his role in the promotion of sports journalism.

He said that Amjad Aziz Malik is a Presidential Award-winning journalist who has earned so much respect and name in the field of journalism that young journalists consider him as their mentor. Zia Sarhadi advised young journalists to learn from Amjad Aziz Malik so that in the future they too can bring glory to the country and nation.

## Shahid Afridi extends support after learning about Shapoor Zadran's health condition

KARACHI: Former Pakistan captain Shahid Afridi has expressed deep concern and extended his support after learning about the health condition of former

"Had a heartfelt call with Shapoor Zadran's brother today. Truly saddened to hear about his condition. You've always been a fighter on the field, and I know

fight this too.

Praying for your speedy recovery. The 38-year-old is reportedly in a critical condition in hospital, with recent updates indicating he has been admitted to intensive care due to a serious medical complication.

Family members have also shared updates on social media, appealing for prayers and support as he continues treatment.

Reports from mid-April 2026 suggest that he is battling for his life, with doctors describing his condition as extremely serious and noting that certain 18-hour periods have been particularly crucial for his survival.

Shapoor Zadran, a former left-arm pacer, represented Afghanistan in 44 ODIs, taking 43 wickets, and featured in 36 T20s, claiming 37 wickets.

He also had a brief but impactful stint in franchise cricket, including appearances in the Bangladesh Premier League, where he took 10 wickets in eight matches.

Zadran retired in 2025 after a career spanning more than a decade, during which he played a key role in Afghanistan's rise in international cricket.



Afghanistan pacer Shapoor Zadran.

Afridi took to social media platform X (formerly Twitter) to convey his sympathy and prayers, highlighting the emotional impact of the news and wishing strength to the family during this difficult time.

you'll fight this too. Praying for your speedy recovery," Afridi wrote. Had a heartfelt call with Shapoor Zadran's brother today. Truly saddened to hear about his condition. You've always been a fighter on the field, and I know you'll

## Layla Banaras: Bridging two worlds, building Pakistan's women's football future

KARACHI: In the evolving landscape of Pakistan women's football, diaspora talent is playing an increasingly important role, and few embody that shift more clearly than Layla Banaras.

Born in Birmingham in 2006 to a Pakistani father and English mother, Banaras has already carved out a professional pathway in English football while simultaneously becoming an important part of Pakistan's national team setup.

A midfielder for FA Women's National League South club Lewes, she represents a growing generation of

Now firmly established in the English system, Banaras continues to grow as a player in a highly competitive environment while balancing her international commitments with Pakistan.

Her decision to represent Pakistan came at a defining stage in her career.

"I think for me it was the right time in my career and my life to sort of take that next step to play international football, and to represent Pakistan means so much, so I thought when they came, and they offered, I thought, why not like just do it, and it's been a dream so far."



British South Asian women breaking into elite football environments.

Her journey is not just about football development; it is also about identity, belonging, and opportunity across two cultures. "It's like two different worlds coming together, so it has really taught me a lot about myself and about the world, really, and I think I'm so grateful that I was brought up in that sort of household." That dual identity has helped shape her outlook, both as a player and as a person navigating the demands of professional sport.

Like many footballers, Banaras' earliest steps came far away from stadium lights. "I got introduced to football through, obviously, my brother, my cousins, my family. We always used to play in the garden, so that's what sort of, you know, pushed me to play football, sort of." That informal beginning eventually turned into a historic rise through English football. In January 2023, she made history as the first South Asian heritage woman to appear for Birmingham City in the professional era, debuting in an FA Cup match against Huddersfield Town.

Later, she joined Wolverhampton Wanderers on dual registration before moving to Lewes in 2025.

That choice has added a new layer to her football journey, one that connects her to her roots while testing her at the international level.

Like many players of her generation, Banaras grew up watching some of football's biggest names.

"I used to watch clips of Messi, Ronaldo, Neymar, Ronaldinho, just all these legends really, and I think they really helped me develop my game and really inspire me."

Since joining the national setup, Banaras has quickly adapted to international football. In Pakistan's AFC Women's Asian Cup qualification campaign in Jakarta, she made an immediate impact from defence, registering assists in key matches against Indonesia and Kyrgyzstan.

Her performances reflect both technical ability and game intelligence, rare qualities for a young footballer adjusting to international demands.

Banaras also highlighted the importance of international exposure in shaping team unity and development.

"I think the experience in West Africa has been amazing," she said about the Pakistan team's tour to the Ivory Coast.

## Pakistan's contingent for Asian Beach Games announced

KARACHI: The Pakistan Olympic Association (POA) on Thursday announced a 40-member national contingent for the Asian Beach Games, scheduled to be held from

kabaddi, triathlon and handball as part of efforts to provide international exposure to its athletes.

The athletics squad includes Faiza Riaz, Tameen

Kashif Ali, Asif Ali, Asif Ali, Imran Khan, Hazrat Hussain, Muhammad Shahid Bashir, Muaz Ali, Ahmad Hassan Baig and Muhammad Sa'im. Azhar Ul Haq has been

The kabaddi squad includes Kashif Razzaq, Farhan Ali, Usman Ahmad, Muhammad Zohaib Niaz, Muhammad Jamshaid and Waqar Ali. Rahat Maqsood Ali and Badshah Gul will serve as coaches.

Hamza Asif and Ayesha Waqas will compete in triathlon, with Abdul Chaffar Gujjar as coach.

The wrestling team comprises Muhammad Abdullah, Muhammad Asad Ullah, Muhammad Inam and Muhammad Gulzar, while Naveed Afzal has been named team official.

The contingent also includes Muhammad Abubakar Ali (Press Attaché), Imran Ahmad Khan and Sana Ali (HQ officials), Mian Qasim Rehman (Doctor), Muhammad Hashim (Physiotherapist), and Muqees Asim Muhammad Shah (NOC Attaché).

The Pakistan Olympic Association expressed confidence that the contingent would uphold the country's sporting spirit at the event.



April 21 to 30 in Sanya.

According to an official statement, Pakistan will compete in six disciplines: athletics, judo, wrestling,

Khan and Sami Ullah, while Rafique Ahmed will serve as coach.

The handball team comprises Mudassar Shahzad,

named coach.

In judo, Pakistan will be represented by Shahzaib and Ambreen Tariq under coach Liaquat Ali.

# China pledges financing for Vietnam rail links



# WORLD NEWS

## Time to Recognize a True Friend, UAE's Extraordinary Support for Pakistan

# H.H Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan with PM Muhammad Shahbaz Sharif

### Why Pakistan Must Reclaim the Narrative of Gratitude for the UAE

**NADEEM FAISAL BAIGA**

In recent years, a noticeable gap has emerged in segments of Pakistani media discourse—particularly during discussions on Middle East conflicts—where the depth of solidarity and contributions of the United Arab Emirates toward Pakistan is often underrepresented. A closer and more balanced assessment reveals a very different reality: the UAE has consistently stood by Pakistan as a steady

partner. These timely interventions saved countless lives and demonstrated unwavering solidarity in moments of national crisis.

**Transforming Healthcare Across Pakistan**  
Through the Abu Dhabi Fund for Development and other initiatives, the UAE has significantly strengthened Pakistan's healthcare infrastructure, especially in underserved areas.

Key institutions include:

tives, numerous water supply and purification plants have

from Karachi Port and reducing road congestion—an important

sions, including its Consulates in Karachi and Islamabad, con-

**A Call for Recognition and Solidarity**



fast partner, extending support across economic stability, humanitarian relief, healthcare, education, and infrastructure. This enduring relationship reflects not only diplomatic alignment but genuine brotherhood and goodwill.

#### A Lifeline for Economic Stability

Financial Support at Critical Moments

At times when Pakistan has faced economic pressures, the UAE has played a decisive stabilizing role. Through the rollover of multi-billion-dollar deposits—including \$2 billion in 2026—the UAE has helped Pakistan maintain foreign exchange reserves and meet key benchmarks set by the International Monetary Fund. Such support has not only strengthened Pakistan's financial standing but also reinforced international confidence in its economy.

#### Saving Lives: Health and Humanitarian Leadership

Emirates Polio Campaign

UAE delivers over 400 million polio vaccine drops in Pakistan

Under royal directives, the Emirates Polio Campaign has administered more than 44 million vaccine doses, protecting millions of Pakistani children in high-risk regions such as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan, and Sindh. This initiative stands as a powerful symbol of the UAE's commitment to Pakistan's future generations.

#### Disaster Relief in Times of Crisis

UAE sends humanitarian assistance for Pakistan's flood affectees

During devastating floods in 2010 and 2022, the UAE rapidly mobilized humanitarian air bridges, delivering essential medical supplies, food, and shelter to affected communi-

ties. These timely interventions saved countless lives and demonstrated unwavering solidarity in moments of national crisis.

#### Investing in Education and Human Potential

Schools and Skills Development

The UAE has made transformative investments in Pakistan's education sector, particularly in rural and underprivileged regions. Through Dubai Cares, over 70,000 children—especially girls—have gained access to quality primary education in Sindh and Punjab.

#### Institutions such as:

Sheikh Khalifa Public School, Rahim Yar Khan  
Sheikh Khalifa Technical College, Peshawar  
are empowering youth with modern education and vocational skills, helping reduce poverty and enhance employability.

#### Teacher Training for Lasting Impact

The "Teachers Without Frontiers" program has trained educators nationwide, equipping them with advanced teaching methodologies to better serve students in underserved communities.

Clean Water, Infrastructure, and Energy Support

Access to Safe Drinking Water

Through UAE-PAP initia-

been established in remote areas, significantly reducing waterborne diseases and improving public health.

#### Building Connectivity and Growth

The UAE has funded critical infrastructure projects, including roads and bridges that connect remote regions with urban centers, boosting trade and mobility.

#### Addressing Energy Challenges

Grants and soft loans from the UAE have supported Pakistan's energy sector, helping to mitigate power shortages and strengthen electricity distribution systems.

#### Modernizing Transport and Trade

Minister of State for Railways and Finance Bilal Azhar Kayani in a meeting with UAE Minister of Energy and Infrastructure Suhail Mohamed Al Mazrouei

Recent collaboration with DP World aims to modernize Pakistan Railways' freight capacity, improving logistics

step toward economic efficiency and regional trade integration.

to provide critical assistance, particularly in medical

emergencies, further reflecting its commitment to the welfare of Pakistani citizens.

#### Consular Support and Welfare Services

The UAE's diplomatic mis-

ties, numerous water supply and purification plants have

from Karachi Port and reducing road congestion—an important

sions, including its Consulates in Karachi and Islamabad, con-

A Call for Recognition and Solidarity

At a time when global narratives are often shaped by selective perspectives, it is important for the Pakistani nation to acknowledge those who have consistently stood by it. The UAE's contributions are not symbolic—they are tangible, far-reaching, and life-changing. Now is the moment for Pakistanis to stand shoulder to shoulder with their Emirati brothers and sisters, recognizing a partnership built on trust, compassion, and mutual respect.

#### A Friendship That Transcends Time

In today's complex world, conflicts may last for days or months, but the impact of true friendship endures for generations. The relationship between Pakistan and the UAE is one such enduring bond—defined not just by diplomacy, but by action, sacrifice, and heartfelt commitment. The UAE's extraordinary support and genuine love for Pakistan deserve not only recognition but also appreciation at every level of society.



## A Preventable Tragedy

# How Medical Negligence Fueled a Child HIV Outbreak in Pakistan



**BARRISTER SARA ALI SYED**

A deeply disturbing public health crisis has emerged from Taunsa, Punjab, exposing systemic failures in Pakistan's healthcare system and raising urgent questions about accountability, governance, and patient safety. Investigations, including a major exposé by, have revealed that hundreds of children were infected with HIV due to gross medical negligence; practices that continued even after official intervention.

Between November 2024 and October 2025, at least 331 children in Taunsa tested positive for HIV. What makes this outbreak particularly alarming is

that the vast majority of affected children were born to HIV-negative parents, ruling out mother-to-child transmission in most cases. Instead, evidence overwhelmingly points to unsafe medical practices; specifically, the repeated reuse of contaminated syringes and improper handling of injectable medications.

The Tehsil Headquarters (THQ) Hospital in Taunsa has been identified as a central point in this crisis. Local doctors first raised concerns in late 2024 after noticing an unusual spike in HIV cases among children who had received treatment at the facility. Subsequent data from provincial AIDS screening programs confirmed that contaminated needles were responsible for more than half of the infections.

In response, the Punjab government initially suspended the hospital's Medical Superintendent (MS) in March 2025, when 106 cases had already been reported. However, in a move that raises serious concerns about institutional accountability, the same official was later reappointed to another government healthcare facility where he continued treating patients, including children. More troubling is the revela-

tion that unsafe practices did not stop.

Undercover footage obtained by BBC investigators in late 2025; months after the government's so-called "crackdown"; documented ongoing violations of basic medical protocols. Over 32 hours of secret filming inside the children's ward, the investigation captured repeated reuse of syringes, contamination of multi-dose vials & widespread disregard for infection control measures.

The footage showed syringes being reused at least ten times on shared medication vials, potentially infecting entire batches of medicine. In four instances, contaminated drugs were administered to multiple children. Healthcare staff, including doctors, were seen administering injections without gloves on 66 separate occasions, in one particularly shocking instance, a nurse retrieved a used syringe containing residual fluid and handed it over for reuse on another child.

Medical experts have described these practices as "extremely dangerous" and in direct violation of international safety standards. Even when a new needle is attached, the reuse of a contaminated syringe

body can transmit blood-borne viruses such as HIV.

Despite this damning evidence, hospital authorities have denied wrongdoing. The current Medical Superintendent dismissed the footage as either outdated or staged,

insisting that infection control measures are being properly followed. Similarly, official statements from local authorities claim that no "conclusive epidemiological evidence" directly links the hospital to the outbreak; despite overwhelming circumstantial and documented proof.

An internal inspection report, conducted jointly by international health bodies and leaked to investigators, paints an equally grim picture. It highlights severe deficiencies in hygiene, lack of essential medicines, reuse of intravenous equipment, and a near-total breakdown of infection prevention protocols; particularly in pediatric emergency wards.

This is not an isolated incident.

Pakistan has previously witnessed similar outbreaks, most notably in Rato Dero, Sindh, where hundreds of children were infected under comparable circumstances. More recently,

cases have also emerged in Karachi, where dozens of children contracted HIV in a government hospital; again linked to syringe reuse. Several deaths have already been reported.

Experts argue that the crisis is driven by a toxic combination of systemic issues: chronic underfunding, supply shortages, lack of training, weak oversight, and a cultural overreliance on injectable treatments; even when medically unnecessary. In many public hospitals, staff are forced to ration limited supplies, leading to dangerous shortcuts that put lives at risk.

The human cost of this negligence is devastating. Children like Asma, diagnosed with HIV at just 10 years old, now face a lifetime of medical treatment, social stigma, and psychological trauma. Many families report isolation, discrimination, and the heartbreak of losing young children to a disease that should have been entirely preventable.

As new infections continue to be reported, the failure to take decisive action reflects not just administrative inefficiency but a profound disregard for human life. Suspending officials without ensuring accountability, allowing them to resume prac-

tice elsewhere, and denying clear evidence of malpractice only perpetuates the cycle of harm.

This is no longer just a healthcare issue; it is a national emergency and a moral crisis.

Immediate, transparent, and enforceable reforms are essential.

These must include strict monitoring of medical practices, guaranteed supply of sterile equipment, comprehensive staff training, and above all, accountability for those responsible. Without urgent intervention, the very institutions meant to heal will continue to endanger the most vulnerable.

The children of Taunsa; and across Pakistan....deserve better.

#### About the Author

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# REAR WINDOW

## Governor KP, British High Commissioner discuss bilateral cooperation, regional situation

### TIMES REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi on Friday met British High Commissioner

sustainable development through technical cooperation and institutional partnerships. The British High Commissioner appreciated

matic engagement. He emphasized that Pakistan had always believed in negotiations for achieving lasting peace in the region. Faisal Karim Kundi also



Jane Marriott here and discussed the evolving regional situation and matters of mutual interest, with a focus on enhancing bilateral cooperation.

Pakistan's effective diplomacy and constructive efforts in facilitating the Iran-US ceasefire, acknowledging its role in promoting regional stability.

highlighted that a large number of skilled youth, technical experts, and professionals from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were contributing their services in the United Kingdom.

During the meeting, both sides exchanged views on strengthening collaboration in various sectors, including energy, security, minerals, investment promotion, and

Speaking on the occasion, the Governor said Pakistan remained committed to promoting peace and stability in the region and across the globe through dialogue and diplo-

He expressed hope that the British government would create more opportunities for talented youth from the province.

### Governor KP meets Chairman Senate, discusses political stability

MULTAN: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi visited Gilani House here on Friday and met Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani to discuss the overall political situation in the country. Secretary Information PPP Nadeem Afzal Chan was also present during the meeting. The two leaders held a detailed exchange of views on the prevailing political landscape, economic challenges, and issues related to national stability. They agreed that political harmony and continuity of the democratic process were essential in the current circumstances. Speaking on the occasion, Governor Kundi said that all political forces must play a collective role to address the challenges faced by the country, adding that resolving public issues should remain the top priority.

### Governor KP inaugurates Hadith Hall in Jamia Ashrafia

#### TIMES REPORT

PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi visited the renowned religious seminary Jamia Ashrafia located on Eidgah Road, Peshawar, yesterday. Upon his arrival, Chief Khateeb of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Maulana Muhammad Tayyab Qureshi and faculty members of Jamia Ashrafia warmly welcomed him. During the visit, the Governor inaugurated the "Maulana Muhammad Yousaf Qureshi (late) Hall" established for the teaching of Hadith sciences at the seminary. On this occasion, Maulana Muhammad Tayyab Qureshi thanked the Governor for his visit. Addressing the gathering, the Governor said that religious seminaries and scholars have a highly significant role in maintaining inter-sect and interfaith harmony in the country. He urged scholars to promote messages of love, tolerance, and brotherhood through the pulpit and to educate the public about the rights and responsibilities of the state.



### PFUJ historic unity agreement reached

#### TIMES REPORT

PESHAWAR: In an important step toward unity, the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ), under the leadership of Afzal Butt and Shamim Shahid, has reached a principled agreement on the merger and unification of the organization. A six-member committee has been formed to finalize the details and procedure of this unification.

As part of ongoing efforts to unite PFUJ—the



country's premier representative body of journalists—a high-level delegation led by Afzal Butt visited the Peshawar Press Club on Thursday. The delegation included senior members such as Mazhar Abbas, Nasir Zaidi, Arshad Ansari, Asif Bashir Chaudhry, Ayub Jan Sarhandi, Shehzada Zulfiqar, Lala Asad Pathan, Fauzia Shahid, Nayyir Ali, and Ali Raza Alvi, among other senior members.

The delegation was warmly received by Shamim Shahid along with Raja Riaz, M Riaz, Kashifuddin Syed, Arshad Aziz Malik, Saif ul Islam Saifi, Zia ul Haq, and other senior colleagues.

On the occasion, Afzal Butt thanked Shamim Shahid and his team for the warm welcome and emphasized that journalists across Pakistan are currently facing serious challenges. He stated that unity within PFUJ is the need of the hour, and his delegation has come with sincerity and firm commitment to achieve this goal.

Shamim Shahid, in his remarks, said that he and his colleagues are equally committed and sincerely desire unity within this premier journalists' body. Following detailed discussions between both sides, a consensus was reached on merger and unification, and a joint declaration was signed by Afzal Butt and Shamim Shahid. Mazhar Abbas and M Riaz signed the document as witnesses. According to the agreement, a six-member committee has been constituted. Ali Raza Alvi, Nasir Hussain, and Bakhtzada Yousafzai will represent Afzal Butt's side, while Arshad Aziz Malik, Raja Riaz, and Saif ul Islam Saifi will represent Shamim Shahid's side. The committee is tasked with finalizing the modalities of the merger and submitting its report by May 16.

### Book Fair inaugurated at Women University Swabi

#### OUR CORRESPONDENT

SWABI: At Women University Swabi, a Book Fair was inaugurated by Secretary Higher Education Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Muhammad Israr Khan, as the chief guest. The inauguration ceremony was attended by Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Ghazala Yasmeen, Registrar Muhammad Tayab, P r o c u r e m e n t Officer Noor ul Ghani, faculty members, and students. Speaking on the occasion, Prof. Dr. Ghazala Yasmeen said that books play a central role in the intellectual, academic, and moral development of students. She said that book fairs create awareness among the younger generation about the importance of reading and encourage them to build a strong relationship with knowledge, research, and literature.

She added that universities are not merely centers of formal education, but institutions that also produce aware, responsible, and thoughtful citizens, and that books remain the strongest means of achieving this purpose.

Chief Guest Muhammad Israr Khan, Secretary Higher Education, also appreciated the initiative and said that promoting a culture of reading in educational institutions is essential for academic excellence and intellectual growth. He said that book fairs provide students with access to valuable academic material and strengthen their habit of learning beyond the classroom.

## Amir Muqam announces financial aid for Haripur's Gas blast

#### OUR CORRESPONDENT

HARIPUR: Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs, Gilgit-Baltistan and SAFRON, and President of PML-N Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Engr. Amir Muqam, visited the site of the tragic gas pipeline explosion near Hattar Industrial Estate in Haripur and announced financial assistance for the victims' families.

He stated that, on the directives of Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, a compensation of Rs. 1 million will be provided to the families of each deceased, while Rs. 500,000 will be given to the injured. During the visit, Engr. Amir Muqam conducted a

detailed inspection of the affected area and received a briefing from the concerned authorities.



He later visited the homes of the deceased, met with their families, expressed his condolences,

and offered prayers for the departed souls as well as for the speedy recovery of the injured.

Member of the National Assembly Babar Nawaz Khan and other notable figures were also present on the occasion. Expressing deep sorrow over the incident, the Federal Minister said that the federal government stands in full solidarity with the bereaved families. He ordered an immediate and transparent inquiry into the incident and directed the relevant authorities to determine the causes and submit a report at the earliest so that those responsible can be held accountable.

He also condemned the incident involving the mistreatment of a police official during the rescue operation, stating that the matter has been taken up with the Inspector General of Police and strict action will be taken.

## Initiatives reviewed for strengthening healthcare infrastructure in KP

#### TIMES REPORT

PESHAWAR: A high-level meeting was held under the chairmanship of Provincial Minister for Health, Mr. Khaleeq ur Rehman, with Mr. Shahid Ullah Khan, Secretary Health, in attendance to review key initiatives for strengthening healthcare infrastructure in the province.

During the meeting, the District Health Officer (DHO) Nowshera presented a comprehensive proposal for the construction of a Category-B Hospital in the Provincial Housing Authority (PHA) Housing Scheme, Jaluzai, District Nowshera.

The proposed hospital, once implemented, is expected to

cater to the healthcare needs of approximately 1 million popu-



lation from surrounding areas of District Nowshera and District Peshawar. In line with the government's forward-looking vision, the facility is also planned to serve as a future health hub for the PHA Housing Scheme and the greater Peshawar Valley region.

The project will not only

enhance access to quality healthcare services but will

also contribute to local economic development by creating employment opportunities and supporting allied activities in the area.

The proposed hospital will offer 24/7 emergency services, along with specialized care in more than 13 medical specialties, supported by advanced diagnostic facilities to ensure

comprehensive patient care under one roof.

Minister Health Khaleeq ur Rehman emphasized the importance of timely execution of the project and reaffirmed the government's commitment to improving healthcare delivery across the province. He directed the concerned authorities to take necessary steps for the swift processing and implementation of the proposal.

The local community has expressed its appreciation for the efforts of the Provincial Health Minister in initiating this transformative project.

The meeting concluded with a collective resolve and prayers for the successful implementation of this vital healthcare initiative.

## KP Agri Dept holds online open forum to farming community

#### TIMES REPORT

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Agriculture Department organized online Khuli Kachehri, chaired by Secretary Agriculture Dr. Muhammad Bakhtiar Khan. Farmers from across the province participated online and directly presented their issues, complaints and suggestions to the Secretary Agriculture.

Senior officials of the Agriculture Department were also in attendance.

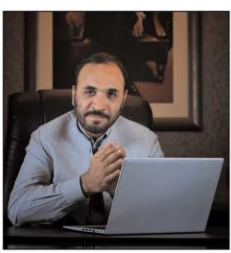
Addressing the forum, Dr. Muhammad Bakhtiar Khan stated that ensuring transparency, merit and improved service delivery within the department remains a top priority.

He emphasized that corruption, irregularities and misuse of authority will not be tolerated, adding that strict action will be taken without delay wherever such practices are identified.

He urged the public, particularly the farming community to report any shortcomings or negligence within the department so that timely corrective measures can be taken. He noted that such feedback would not

only enhance the department's performance but also help improve services for farmers.

Secretary Agriculture department further stated that department is committed to providing modern agricultural



facilities to farmers, increasing agricultural productivity and putting the agriculture sector on a path of sustainable growth. He reaffirmed the department's resolve to utilize all available resources for the development of agriculture, with special focus on promoting modern technology, farmer guidance and facilitation.

He advised farmers to

remain in regular contact with the Agriculture Department and to share their suggestions, recommendations and concerns in a timely manner, so that policies and practical measures can be made more effective. He added that farmers' input is of vital importance and that sustainable improvement in agriculture is only possible through their consultation.

Dr. Muhammad Bakhtiar Khan also highlighted that concrete and effective measures are being taken to improve the overall performance of the Agriculture Department.

He directed District Directors of Agriculture to ensure prompt resolution of farmers' issues in their respective districts, increase their field presence and ensure effective implementation of government policies.

He expressed hope that, in line with Chief Minister's directives and Chief Secretary's good governance reforms, the organization of such online Khuli Kachari will further strengthen coordination between farmers and Agriculture Department.

## Rain disrupts power supply on 30 PESCO feeders: Spokesman

#### TIMES REPORT

PESHAWAR: Power supply to around 30 feeders across the Peshawar Electric Supply Company (PESCO) region was disrupted due to rainfall, a spokesman said on Friday.

He said 15 feeders in Peshawar, 10 in Swat, and five in Bannu were affected by the outage.

In Peshawar, electricity supply was suspended in areas including Akhunabad, Acheni, Gulzai, Zaryab, Daulat Pura, and Takhtabad. In Swat, outages were reported in parts of Wazirabad, Chakdara, Upper Chitral, and Hisar Baba.

Similarly, in Bannu, power supply was affected in Abdul Khel, Sabir Baba, and Sarwangi areas. Chief Executive of PESCO, Akhtar Hameed Khan directed the field staff to ensure immediate restoration of electricity.

The spokesman said that repair work was underway on all affected feeders and power supply would be restored soon.

He added that all other feeders in the region were operational and electricity was being supplied as per routine.