



**Govt approves effective Hajj Policy 2026: Sardar Yousaf**



**Leghari rejects NEPR findings, says reforms cut circular debt, saved \$17bn**



**First-ever 'Digital home Delivery' by Punjab CM via sahalat bazaars app sets province-wide records**

Founded By: (Late) Rehmat Khan

ABC CERTIFIED

Email: editor.peakpoint@gmail.com Website: www.peakpoint.pk

Executive Group Editor Arif Mehmood Khan



Monday 19 January 2026 Rajab Al-Murjab 29, 1447 A.H VOI No: 05 Issue No. 361 Pages 4 Rs.20

# Trump invites PM Shehbaz to join Gaza 'Board of Peace': FO

**PEAK POINT**  
ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has been invited to be a part of the Gaza "Board of Peace" that is being formed by United States President Donald Trump, the Foreign Office has said. "The prime minister of Pakistan has received the invitation from the president of the United States to join the Board of Peace on Gaza," said FO spokesperson Tahir Andrabi in response to media queries. "Pakistan will remain engaged with international efforts for peace and security in Gaza, leading to a lasting solution to the Palestine issue in accordance with United Nations resolutions," he added. The so-called "Board of

Peace" has begun to take shape as the US moves on to the second phase of Trump's 20-point peace plan for Gaza, which stands decimated after two years of Israel's bombardment. Trump had already declared himself the chair of the body, as he promotes a controversial vision of economic development in the Palestinian territory. On Friday, the US president named his Secretary of State Marco Rubio, former British prime minister Tony Blair, World Bank President Ajay Banga, and his senior negotiators Jared Kushner and Steve Witkoff to the panel. The next day, leaders of Egypt, Turkey, Argentina and Canada revealed that they had also been asked to join the peace board.



**KARACHI:** Rescue officials try to extinguish a fire at Gul Plaza. Authorities have confirmed six deaths so far, including a firefighter, after the fire erupted on Saturday night at the mall located a MA Jinnah road.

## Talks only possible if other side realises excesses committed: Achakzai



**PEAK POINT**  
SANN (JAMSHORO): The leader of the country's main opposition alliance believes that there can only be talks if the other side realises that excesses have been committed that need to be redressed.

The newly-appointed Leader of the Opposition in the National Assembly, at the residence of Syed Zain Shah, where he had arrived to attend the 122nd birth anniversary celebrations of G.M. Syed.

However, Mr Achakzai made it clear that he was speaking in his capacity as leader of the Tehreek Tahafuz Ayeen-i-Pakistan (TTAP) alliance.

"I haven't yet received the notification, that's why I will comment as TTAP leader," he said in response to a question about how he would manifest his role as the opposition leader in the assembly.

On the subject of possible talks with the rulers to defuse prevailing political tensions, Mr Achakzai said, "If someone has the realisation that excesses have been committed, then there is recourse and treatment.

## Search operation begins to locate over 50 missing people at Karachi's Gul Plaza as fire doused after 24 hours

**PEAK POINT**

KARACHI: A search operation at Karachi's Gul Plaza began after 10pm on Sunday evening as fire crews were finally able to douse the fire after 24 hours, with Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah saying that six deaths have been confirmed, but over 50 people were reportedly missing.

According to Rescue 1122 officials, their teams had finally managed to enter the charred building to launch a search for survivors and bodies as the cooling process was still underway.

The fire, which erupted on Saturday night at the mall located on MA Jinnah Road, had

been brought under control by about 70 per cent by late Sunday afternoon, officials said.

Speaking to the media at around 7pm, CM Murad said, "I say with utmost grief that so far, it is confirmed that six people have lost their lives, including KMC firefighter Furqan Shaukat."

He added that 22 others were hurt and had now been discharged from hospitals as they had faced minor injuries. "But what is very concerning [...] is that around 58 people — some people even say more than 60 — are missing. May God give them more life."

According to a list shared with Dawn around the same time, the South district office

had received reports of 53 missing people from their families so far.

The Sindh government has established a helpline to report anyone missing due to the fire or to direct their queries, which can be contacted at 0313-5048048, 021-99206372 and 021-99205625.

A separate statement by the South Zone police also listed the following helpline contact numbers: 021-99205670, 021-99201196 and 021-99205691.

Hundreds of people had gathered around the building today, including distraught store owners whose businesses had turned to ash.

During his media talk, CM Murad noted that the mall was a

three-storey building with a basement and housed more than 1,000 shops.

While the chief minister noted that the cause of the fire could not be ascertained for sure at this stage, he said a short circuit was being blamed for igniting the blaze in a shop with flammable material.

Termining it a "very upsetting" incident, he stressed that authorities were making efforts to find missing people.

The Sindh CM detailed that around 26 fire tenders, 10 bowzers and multiple snorkels took part in the fire extinguishing operations. CM Murad, citing what he had been informed, said an alert about the fire was received at 10:16pm.

## President, PM express deep sorrow over Gul Plaza fire incident

**PEAK POINT**

ISLAMABAD : President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif expressed deep grief and sorrow over the tragic fire incident at Gul Plaza, located on M.A. Jinnah Road in Karachi on Sunday, and ordered that all possible assistance be provided to the affected people. Expressing grief on the tragic incident, President Zardari conveyed condolences for the loss of precious human lives, extending heartfelt sympathy to the bereaved families. The president said that the Sindh government.

## SBP to hold first monetary policy meeting of 2026 on Jan 26

**PEAK POINT**

KARACHI: A large majority of market participants expect the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) to cut interest rates at its first Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) meeting of 2026, according to a Monetary Policy Survey conducted by a local research firm. According to a survey, around 80 per cent of respondents expect the central bank to reduce interest rates further in the upcoming monetary policy. The survey found that 56 per cent of participants anticipate a 50 basis points cut in the policy rate, while 15 per cent believe.

## Trump vows tariffs on eight European nations over Greenland

**PEAK POINT**

WASHINGTON : President Donald Trump on Saturday vowed to implement a wave of increasing tariffs on European allies until the United States is allowed to buy Greenland, escalating a row over the future of Denmark's vast Arctic island.

In a post on Truth Social, Trump said additional 10% import tariffs would take effect on February 1 on goods from Denmark, Norway, Sweden, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Finland and Great Britain — all already subject to tariffs imposed by Trump.

Those tariffs would increase to 25% on June 1 and would continue until a deal was reached for the

U.S. to purchase one in five respondents support the idea of Greenland, Trump wrote.



Trump has repeatedly insisted he will settle for nothing less than ownership of Greenland, an autonomous territory of both Denmark and Greenland have insisted the island is not for sale and does not want to be part of the United States.

A Reuters/Ipsos poll of U.S. residents this week found that less than

acquiring Greenland.

The president has repeatedly said Greenland is vital to U.S. security because of its strategic location and large mineral deposits, and has not ruled out using force to take it. European nations this week sent military personnel to the island at Denmark's request.

"These Countries, who are playing this very dangerous game, have put a level of risk in play that is not tenable or sustainable," Trump wrote. Protesters in Denmark and Greenland demonstrated on Saturday against Trump's demands and called for the territory to be left to determine its own future.

The countries named by Trump on Saturday have backed Denmark, warning that the U.S. military seizure of a territory in NATO could collapse the military alliance that Washington leads.

"The president's announcement comes as a surprise," Denmark's Foreign Minister Lars Lokke Rasmussen said in a statement.

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer was unusually blunt.

## Junaid Safdar's Walima ceremony held in Jati Umra



**PEAK POINT**

LAHORE: The wedding reception of Junaid Safdar, grandson of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) supreme Nawaz Sharif and son of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz, was held in Lahore. According to media reports, the Walima reception of Junaid Safdar and Shanzeh Ali took place at Jati Umra Farms, where around 800 guests were invited. A 50-member orchestra entertained the attendees with a variety of musical performances, led by international music director Najad Ali. The walima ceremony was attended by prominent political figures, members of the business community, as well as international guests. The musical band rehearsed continuously for seven days ahead of their performance.



# SPORTS



## US diplomat hails Qalandars as architects of global sporting unity



**PEAK POINT** Qalandars' developmental 'blueprint' exported to American soil. She revealed that several Qalandars players are already slated to feature in U.S. cricket leagues, a move she believes will catalyze the sport's growth ahead of the Los Angeles Olympics 2028, where cricket makes its historic debut. "I am confident that in the coming years, Lahore Qalandars will support player development and help us produce the next generation of US cricket stars," Ms. Baker remarked. She noted that as the U.S. profound desire to see the

World Cup and the 2028 Olympics, the franchise's expertise in identifying raw talent could be the 'magic ingredient' for the American sporting landscape. "With cricket poised to make its historic debut at the Olympics, the development of our cricket teams becomes essential. I am eager to see Lahore Qalandars partner with us in this mission, helping to shape the future of American cricket for the global spotlight."

Reflecting on her diplomatic tenure, the U.S. diplomat candidly admitted that her initial exposure to cricket was minimal despite its overwhelming popularity in Pakistan.—APP Her perspective shifted dramatically following an invitation from Mr. Atif Rana, the owner of Lahore Qalandars, to witness a PSL 10 quarterfinal match at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium. Recalling the electric atmosphere, Ms. Baker described being captivated by the 'Qalandars' spirit'. "The vibrant crowd and seeing world-class athletes like legendary Shaheen Shah Afridi perform left a lasting impression," she said. "Seeing the team fight, score, and win made me truly fall in love with the game of cricket."

## PCB revises timings for Pakistan-Australia T20 matches, tickets now on sale



**PEAK POINT** LAHORE: The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has announced revised timings for the upcoming T20 series between Pakistan and Australia. The three-match series will now see games commencing at 4:00 PM local time, moving two hours earlier from the previously scheduled 6:00 PM start. The opening T20 will take place at Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore on 29 January, with the series running until 1 February. Each match is set for a 4:00 PM start, giving spectators more daylight hours to enjoy the live cricket experience. Ticket details Fans eager to witness the action can now secure tickets online or at designated TCS Express Centres, with sales starting Monday at 3:00 PM.

## Pakistan Super League to introduce players' auction system



**PEAK POINT** ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Super League (PSL) Governing Council's Working Committee have decided to introduce a players' auction system alongside revisions to the retention mechanism. According to sources, the decision was taken during a late-night meeting of the Working Committee, where detailed discussions were held on auction drafts and player retentions for PSL 11. The proposed framework will now be sent to PCB Chairman Mohsin Naqvi for final approval. If Zalmi and Sialkot required, a full meeting of the PSL Governing Council Under the proposed retention policy, five existing franchises have agreed on retaining four players each, including one designated as a brand ambassador. Each retained player will belong to a different category, while one player may be shifted to a lower category to serve as a brand ambassador. Sources further said that new franchises will be allowed to select players from the remaining pool. Two new teams reportedly pushed for a zero-retention policy, under which all remaining players would be placed in the auction pool and picked through the auction process. The finalized auction and retention formula will be forwarded to Chairman Mohsin Naqvi, with an official announcement expected within the next one to two days.



HARARE: Coach of Pakistani Cricket Team giving tips to players for ICC Mens U-19 Cup during training session on Sunday.

## 3rd Army Chief Inter-Club Hockey Tournament Begins in Bannu

**PEAK POINT** BANNU: The 3rd Army Chief Inter-Club Hockey Tournament formally got underway in Bannu, featuring participation from nine leading hockey clubs from across the district. A large turnout of spectators at the opening reflected the strong passion for hockey among local fans. The inaugural match was played between Bacha Khan White Hockey Club and Saeed Khan Hockey Club. The contest proved to be one-sided as Bacha Khan White dominated throughout the match, securing a convincing 10-0 victory. Their players impressed the audience with superior footwork, strong coordination, and an aggressive attacking approach. In the second match, Khadim Hockey Club Bannu faced Amandi Hockey Club Bannu in a closely contested encounter. Both teams displayed disciplined play, but Khadim Hockey Club edged toward the revival and promotion of hockey in the region. Refereeing duties were carried out by Falak Zaman and Waleed Khan, whose fair and professional officiating was widely appreciated by both players and spectators. Addressing the gathering, Regional Sports Officer Kashif Farhan said that club-level competitions form the foundation of any sport. He noted that strong performance and structure at the club level enable a sport to gain recognition at national and international forums.



## All set to launch 21st International Jeep Rally





# Turkiye announced scholarships for students form Azad Jammu and Kashmir

## PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Pak-Turk Maarif International Schools & Colleges have officially announced the launch of MAGIS 2026-1 (Maarif Entrance Exam) — a merit-based admission and scholarship programme aimed at identifying talented and high-achieving students across Pakistan.

MAGIS is a competitive entrance examination designed to provide deserving students access to quality education, financial support, and international learning opportunities. Through

this initiative, successful candidates can secure admission and scholarships at Pak-Turk Maarif campuses, with academic pathways that support future progression to leading international universities.

In a major development, MAGIS is being launched in Kashmir for the first time, marking a historic milestone for students in the region. The announcement also highlights Pak-Turk Maarif's expansion into Azad Jammu & Kashmir through its first-ever campus in the region, Pak-Turk Maarif International AJK



Muzaffarabad Campus, offering multiple benefits, including merit-based scholarships, tuition fee discounts, financial assistance, and affordable admission fees. Students will also gain exposure to international education standards, includ-

ing opportunities for Turkish language learning. MAGIS has already gained strong nationwide recognition, and till today, over 25,000+ students have appeared in the exam, reflecting the growing trust of parents and students in the programme. With participation from over 5,000 students annually, MAGIS has emerged as one of the most prominent education-driven scholarship initiatives, promoting academic excellence, leadership, and equal access to quality learning.

The registration deadline for MAGIS 2026-1 is

February 5, 2026, while the test will be held on February 15, 2026. The results are scheduled to be announced on February 26, 2026. Candidates shortlisted on the basis of test scores will be called for an interview. MAGIS is a nationwide initiative conducted in 10 major cities across Pakistan, ensuring equal opportunities for aspiring students regardless of geographical location. Students and parents have been encouraged to register online and take the first step toward a brighter academic future.

February 5, 2026, while the test will be held on February 15, 2026. The results are scheduled to be announced on February 26, 2026. Candidates shortlisted on the basis of test scores will be called for an interview.

MAGIS is a nationwide initiative conducted in 10 major cities across Pakistan, ensuring equal opportunities for aspiring students regardless of geographical location. Students and parents have been encouraged to register online and take the first step toward a brighter academic future.

# PFUC delegation visits UOL Well-Being Centre, calls for wider focus on mental health

## WAJIHA TAMSEEL MIRZA

LAHORE: A delegation of the Pakistan Federal Union of Columnists and Creators (PFUC) visited the Well-Being Centre established at The University of Lahore (UOL), where the initiative aimed at promoting mental and psychological health among students and staff was highlighted. Director UOL Well-Being Centre Prof Dr Shamaila Asad briefed the delegation on the objectives, services and working mechanism of the centre. The delegation comprised renowned motivational speaker Qasim Ali Shah, PFUC Chairman and anchorperson Farrukh Shahbaz Warraich, Central President Fareed Razaqi, Vice President Azhar



Tharaj, Secretary General Waqar Aslam, President Women Wing Mahwish Fazal, Member BOG Abdul Majeed, Shahzad Chaudhry, Sajid Khan, Madho Lal and other senior columnists. Speaking on the occasion, Qasim Ali Shah said that nearly 30 per cent of people across the world suffer from psychological issues. Referring to

recent unfortunate incidents at UOL, he said the establishment of the Well-Being Centre was a timely step that would not only help students seek treatment for mental and psychological concerns but also play a role in preventing such incidents within educational institutions. He stressed that universities across Pakistan should follow UOL's example by setting up similar centres. He also highlighted the prevailing stigmas around mental health in Pakistan, where individuals facing psychological challenges are often wrongly labelled as "mentally ill." In contrast, he noted, many developed countries teach happiness as an academic subject and actively engage motivational speakers, underscoring the need to raise awareness and

change mindsets locally. Prof Dr Shamaila Asad told the delegation that the UOL Well-Being Centre will offer free-of-cost treatment and awareness services to students, teachers and staff. She explained that a comprehensive assessment programme has been designed for the entire university, under which teachers, class CRs and GRs will refer students facing mental health challenges, while students may also directly approach the centre. She added that the centre has appointed clinical psychologists, counselling psychologists and health psychologists who will carry out professional assessments and provide appropriate psychological support and guidance.

# Jl Women Wing (Jl Youth) hosts "Meena Bazaar" in Capital

## PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Jamaat-e-Islami Women Wing (JI Youth) held a Meena Bazaar on Sunday at Qazi Farms, Margalla Town, showcasing young women's entrepreneurial and creative skills while promoting economic empowerment. The initiative provided a platform for emerging female entrepreneurs to engage with the community.

# Opinion & Editorial


  
**Arif Mehmood Khan**  
 Group Editor: 0333-5366814  
 Samra Athar Kakakhel  
 Resident Editor  
 Nadim Tanoli  
 Joint Editor: Mob-0301-777874  
 Email: editor.peakpoint@gmail.com  
 www.peakpoint.pk

## Failed power reform

NEPRA's latest state of the industry report tells the familiar story of failed reform in the power sector due to patchy execution, misgovernance, corruption, underinvestment, and unpredictable policy. It also recounts how this reform failure has burdened honest consumers, led to blackouts despite surplus generation, and dragged down the economy. Numerous policy interventions, unbundling and corporatisation of SOEs, and private investment in generation notwithstanding, the sector continues to face challenges that constrain its efficiency and undermine its role in national economic growth, instead of providing relief to consumers across different categories. In fact, the power sector's credibility is at its lowest point as even several policy resets have not been able to correct the situation. So, it is no surprise that whatever financial gains the state extracted from private power producers through coercion and renegotiation were quickly swallowed by deep-seated inefficiencies elsewhere in the system. No wonder, electricity remains unaffordable, supplies patchy and a big portion of generation capacity idle, with consumers forced to underwrite losses stemming from systemic failure. The scale of the sector's challenges and their implications for consumers is reflected in the fact that the distribution companies have added some Rs400bn to the circular debt.

## Resistance network in Iran

MUHAMMAD AMIR RANA  
IRAN'S clerical regime seems to have weathered yet another wave of internal resistance, exploited, as always, by its external rivals. But the human losses have left a deep new wound on the Iranian psyche. The immediate threat of a US-Israeli strike has also dispersed. Washington and Tel Aviv, backed by most Gulf capitals, recalibrated their stance after strategic assessments highlighted the danger of a wider regional war and the absence of any realistic plan for a post-regime change scenario.

Inside Iran, resistance against the establishment still struggles to form a unified front or leadership. However, this does not mean the US, Israel or their allies have dropped the goal of political change in Tehran. Instead, they are adjusting their methods. Media reports indicate the regime will not collapse quickly due to a strong security apparatus, loyal institutions, and backing from a sizable segment of the population. Even so, external actors, along with internal resistance networks, are unlikely to allow the regime much time to fully recover from this crisis. Pressure is expected to persist, shifting from low to high intensity, to gradually soften the ground for change.

A key indicator that the ground is fertile for such a shift are the visible cracks within the Assembly of Experts (Majles-i-Khobregan-i-Rahbari), the Guardian Council (Shura-i-

Negabhan), and disputes within or between the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and the regular military (Artesh). All these critical institutions are still aligned with Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei's core strategic worldview, as one Iranian-origin expert noted.

The recent internal resistance has emboldened separatist elements in Arab and Kurdish regions.

To break the regime's coherence, external actors would not only seek to energise internal political resistance but also exploit other domestic fault lines, including fuelling dormant or active insurgencies.

Analysts speculate that separatist and anti-clerical movements are concentrated in several key regions: Khuzestan province in the southwest, where many Arab Iranians harbour grievances; the western border areas, including Kurdistan and West Azerbaijan, where Kurdish separatists remain active; and, from a Pakistani perspective, the Baloch districts in Sistan-Baluchestan and parts of the Khorasan region, where anti-regime Baloch insurgent groups continue their operations. As Vali Nasr explains in his latest book, Iran's Grand Strategy, the clerical regime's doctrine of "forward defence", projecting power abroad to protect the state at home, can also be turned against Iran. Its adversaries can adopt the same approach to weaken the regime from within. Iran's

enemies have already disrupted the Axis of Resistance, the network of Iranian regional proxies built around this forward defence strategy. The next step, as a few analysts suggest, could be the deployment or activation of proxies inside Iran itself. If this occurs, the primary objective would be to draw the Iranian Revolutionary Guard into a deeper engagement on the internal front. An amalgam of political resistance and armed struggle can strain Iranian forces, especially when their proxies cannot come to their aid, as Iran's Axis of Resistance is weak and unable to provide any support. These broader trends are now evident on the ground. Although reports suggest that the recent internal resistance has emboldened separatist elements in Arab and Kurdish regions, it is in the Sistan-Baluchestan belt where several militant outfits have reportedly formed a stronger coalition to intensify their campaign against the Iranian state. Jaishul Adl is a Baloch separatist group operating along the Iran-Pakistan border. It frequently targets Iranian security forces in Baloch-majority regions. The group now calls itself the People's Fighters Front (PFF). Three smaller militant outfits, the Nasr Movement, the Pada Baloch Movement, and the Muhammad Rasul Allah Group, have reportedly merged into this new organisation.

Courtesy Dawn

## Pursuit of ignorance?

### ALI HASSAN BANGWAR

Though the title might sound rather oxymoronic, as ignorance is rarely worth pursuing, the same, nevertheless, has been one of the most desired and perhaps sought-after pursuits vis-à-vis the masses in the corridors of power in our part of the world. This is, as has been throughout history, manifested in all-out efforts to gloss over truth, distort realities, frame exclusive practices for sustaining historical lies, glorify what the country and its people were made to face and justify curbs on questioning, critical thinking, dissent and rights. The pursuit of ignorance or, more aptly, engineered ignorance, suggests a pursuit that tends to cultivate manipulated consent and solidify the interests of particular groups, ideologies and brute operational realities. You might question the claims of public support and logic for paradoxical pursuits — that is, what is it that mandates stakeholders to work against people and truth, and seek manipulated consent? What did all the democratic promises, social contracts and slogans of "people as the fountainhead of power" truly serve? What are the two dynastic despots — institutions and individuals — each claiming, and essentially at others' detriment, outright public support meant for? Or what about social media posts, advertisements and prime-time commercials funded from public taxes in the largely redundant broadcast media, featuring key functionaries claiming outright public support? The answer, though not that brainy, is rather painful and lies in the question itself: why, unlike elsewhere where people are politically awakened and socio-economically empowered by their "entrusted and mandated" stakeholder, do ours almost do otherwise? Since most of Pakistan's power structures and institutions have rarely been truly mandated by and for the people's ultimate welfare, they have been making strides in what they mean for. That is, they understandably show little, if any, concern for the subjects.

Courtesy Tribune

## PMYP, Dellsons partner to launch zero cost digital remittance wallet for overseas Pakistanis



**PEAK POINT**

ISLAMABAD: The Prime Minister's Youth Programme signed a Letter of Intent (LOI) on Sunday with Dellsons Associates Private Limited at the Prime Minister's Office to collaborate on developing a Digital Wallet linked with the Digital Youth Hub, aimed at enabling instant and zero cost remittances for overseas Pakistanis, particularly blue collar

workers in the United Arab Emirates, as part of the government's drive toward a cashless and digital economy.

The LOI signing ceremony was witnessed by PMYP Chairman Rana Mashhood Ahmad Khan, with participation from representatives of the Ministry of Finance, ONE LINK, and United Bank Limited.

The meeting was also attended by

Dr Muhammad Ali Malik, Joint Secretary PMYP, and Ibrahim Amin, Founder and Chairman of Dellsons Associates Private Limited, along with their respective teams.

Under the proposed collaboration, a regulated Digital Wallet will be integrated with PMYP's Digital Youth Hub, allowing overseas Pakistanis in the UAE to send remittances through formal banking channels at zero cost.

The initiative aims to ease financial access for migrant workers, enhance financial inclusion, and encourage the use of documented remittance systems.

The partnership aligns with the prime minister's vision of a digital and cashless economy and supports PMYP's Four Es framework of education, employment, engagement, and environment.

Officials said the initiative would leverage financial technology to promote productive employment.

## Govt approves effective Hajj Policy 2026: Sardar Yousaf

**PEAK POINT**

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Sardar Muhammad Yousaf has said the government has formulated and approved an effective Hajj Policy 2026 in accordance with guidelines issued by Saudi Arabia.

In a Podcast interview with Radio Pakistan's News and Current Affairs Channel, he confirmed that Pakistan's Hajj quota for 2026 stands at one hundred seventy-nine thousand two hundred ten pilgrims.

He said approximately one hundred twenty thousand pilgrims will perform Hajj under the government scheme while sixty thousand through private operators.

He added that training for the 2026 Hajj is currently underway across the country,



with mandatory sessions being conducted in various districts.

Sardar Muhammad Yousaf said around thirty-eight thousand intending pilgrims will travel from Islamabad under the "Road to Makkah" project.

At present, this facility is available only in Islamabad and Karachi, but efforts are underway to extend it to Lahore.

Highlighting the efforts of the Ministry for Religious Affairs in promoting interfaith harmony, he said it provides a platform for all religious minorities in Pakistan.

## Kohistani urges Achakzai to prioritize country's interest over loyalty, play positive opposition role

**PEAK POINT**

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Religious Affairs Khaili Das Kohistani on Sunday called on opposition leader Mahmood Khan Achakzai to take an active role in dialogue under the constitutional framework, stressing that NFC-related reforms can only be introduced with the backing of all opposition parties, notably the PPP.

While speaking to a local news channel, the state minister said that Opposition leader Mahmood Khan Achakzai should rise above personal loyalty to Khan Sahib and play a constructive role for the welfare of the country. Kohistani further emphasized that Achakzai needs to focus on real issues facing the nation, which required cooperation and consensus from all parties.

He emphasized the importance of putting the nation's interests first and contributing positively to dialogue and consensus-build-

ing. He added that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has categorically offered dialogue, but if the PTI and Achakzai continue to follow Khan Sahib's instructions and fail to change their approach, no further dialogue will be possible.

Kohistani stressed that meaningful discussions require a cooperative attitude from all parties.

Talking about NFC and other constitutional reforms, minister said that such reforms would not be possible unless all opposition parties, especially the PPP are on board. He emphasized that without convincing every party, there was no way to move forward with these important reforms.

He added that once all parties were engaged and fully on board, the reforms could be implemented in a constructive and harmonious manner. Kohistani stressed that cooperation and consensus were essential for meaningful constitutional changes.

## Schehzad highlights Pakistan's vision on digital assets

**PEAK POINT**

LAHORE: Advisor to the Federal Finance Minister, Khurram Schehzad, said on Sunday that the government is actively working on policies aimed at empowering youth, particularly by creating opportunities in modern financial and digital sectors. Highlighting the global context, he noted that Bitcoin has a capped global supply of nearly 21 million units, making digital assets a significant topic in today's evolving financial landscape. He was speaking at a fireside chat titled "Tokenizing the Sovereign Assets - Liquidity Ready" during the 27th ITCN Asia exhibition held at the Expo Center.

Khurram Schehzad emphasized the government's evolving role in the digital economy, stating that its primary responsibility was to facilitate innovation and create an enabling environment for emerging technologies rather than hinder progress. Citing available reports, he said that Bitcoin and cryptocurrency mining activities were already taking place in Pakistan.

## First-ever 'Digital home Delivery' by Punjab CM via sahumat bazaars app sets province-wide records

**PEAK POINT**

ISLAMABAD: A historic stride toward convenience and affordability, Punjab CM Maryam Nawaz Sharif's first-ever digital home delivery program via the Punjab Sahulat Bazaars app has set new records by delivering essential goods across the province, with 13 basic food items priced up to 7% below the officially notified DC rates.

Citizens, while speaking to PTV News, applauded and thanked Punjab CM Maryam Nawaz Sharif for the historic digital home delivery program via the Sahulat Bazaars app.

Muhammad Tahir, a resident of Lodhran Punjab said the service helps people save money, reduces travel and fuel costs, and



brings essential items directly to their doorsteps, making daily life easier for everyone.

The program's primary aim is to provide direct relief to citizens by ensuring timely delivery of daily necessities at affordable prices, said another citizen Imran, adding, many praised the initiative as a groundbreaking step toward convenience, affordability and transparency in Punjab's essential goods distribution system. Mubashar Ahmad.

## Leghari rejects NEPRA findings, says reforms cut circular debt, saved \$17bn

**PEAK POINT**

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Energy Sardar Awais Ahmed Khan Leghari on Sunday strongly rebutted observations of the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority's (NEPRA) State of Industry Report 2025, term several conclusions "factually incorrect" and asserting that deep-rooted power sector reforms have already delivered tangible relief to consumers while putting the sector on a sustainable path.

Addressing a press conference here, the minister said NEPRA's report was based on insufficient and outdated data, leading to confusion and misperception. He said the report should have been



released in August 2025, and its delayed publication failed to present the true picture of the power sector or acknowledge the government's achievement of key targets. The minister said the government has made it possible to fully service existing debt through the debt service surcharge, adding that the circular debt will be completely eliminated within the next five to six years.



LAHORE: Advisor to Minister for Finance Khurram Shahzad speaking during 27th ITCN Asia here on Sunday.

## Digital legal platforms, AI integration can improve access to justice: Barrister

**PEAK POINT**

ISLAMABAD: A legal technology expert, Barrister Naveed Khan has said that the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) is playing a vital role in improving access to justice by reducing public fear of litigation and strengthening trust in the judicial system.

Talking to APP, Barrister Naveed Khan said that a number of artificial

intelligence based online platforms, including AI Attorney, Pakistan Law Bot, DigiLawyer and Lexa, are playing an important role in helping the public understand their legal rights. He said these platforms are also assisting users in drafting legal documents and reviewing existing documentation, which has significantly reduced dependence on traditional and time-con-

suming processes. Highlighting the role of askwakeel.pk, Barrister Naveed Khan said the platform stands out by offering detailed legal consultation with direct human interaction at a nominal fee of Rs 2,000. He said the initiative is bridging the gap between citizens and credible legal experts, making professional legal advice more accessible and affordable for the public.

He noted that women, elderly citizens and individuals from remote areas are among the key beneficiaries of online legal services, as many of them only have access to a smartphone. "If people are informed about their rights through digital means, a significant barrier to justice is removed," he added. On the role of artificial intelligence, he clarified that AI should be used as an

assistive tool rather than a replacement for human judgment. "AI can help in documentation, drafting and preliminary case assessment, but human oversight remains essential," he said.

He said a more efficient justice system would not only benefit citizens but also create more opportunities for lawyers and attract foreign investment. "Investors look for effective dispute.

## Ambassador Baloch highlights Pak-France ties

**PEAK POINT**

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Pakistan to France Mumtaz Zahra Baloch, Sunday, highlighted the multifaceted relations between Pakistan and France and the wider francophone world.

She said while the governments created frameworks and agreements, it was the people professionals, academics, entrepreneurs, and civil society leaders, who gave life to bilateral relationships between countries.

The ambassador addressed the Association of Pakistani



Francophone (French-speaking) Professionals (PPRF) at an event held at the Embassy of Pakistan, a press release said.

The ambassador appreciated the work of PPRF and its contribution in promoting professional networking.