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Rabbani urges Senate Chairman to appoint opposition leaders in both houses



CM Maryam Nawaz invites DAMAC Group to invest in emerging tech sector

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PM directs easing credit for SMEs, small farmers to boost economic inclusion

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday directed the State Bank of Pakistan and commercial banks to further simplify and expand credit mechanisms for small and medium enterprises (SMEs), new businesses and small farmers amid terming improved access to finance a top government priority for economic growth and inclusion.

The prime minister made these remarks while chairing a high-level review meeting on facilitation of loans for SMEs, small farmers here, a Prime Minister's Office news release said.

PM Shehbaz Sharif emphasized that priority financing should be ensured for service

providers to promote innovation in the agriculture sector. He also instructed that modern technology and machinery loans for SMEs and small farmers be made more accessible to enhance productivity and competitiveness.

The prime minister directed his Special Assistant on Industries and Production, Haroon Akhtar, along with the SMEDA team, to undertake visits to all provinces, including Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir, and work closely with provincial governments to formulate a comprehensive, coordinated SME facilitation policy.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said that SMEs constitute the backbone of economies and industries in developed countries.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a high level meeting on loans to SME and Agri-Sector.

PM Shehbaz gives green signal to speaker Ayaz Sadiq for PTI talks

PEAK POINT



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has given his approval for negotiations between the government and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI).

According to sources, the prime minister has authorized Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq to lead the talks, and the government delegation is ready to participate at the Speaker's request.

Government sources emphasized that negotiations will only involve elected representatives of PTI, and discussions with non-elected members will not take place.

Meanwhile, sources from the Speaker's office stated that no PTI leader has formally contacted them for talks yet. Speaker Ayaz Sadiq has maintained the parliamentary committee, and if the opposition shows willingness, he will convene its meeting immediately. Parliamentary sources noted that despite the Speaker's offer, the opposition has not reached out so far. The Speaker has invited PTI leaders to visit his chamber for discussions.

It is worth noting that PTI's last meeting with the Speaker was held to appoint Mahmood Achakzai as the opposition leader. Meanwhile,

Pakistan to set up special protection unit for Chinese nationals, says Mohsin Naqvi

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi on Wednesday announced that a special protection unit is being established in Islamabad to ensure the security of Chinese nationals in Pakistan.

Naqvi made the remarks during his meeting with China's Minister of Public Security, Wang Xiaohong, at the Ministry of Public Security headquarters in Beijing. According to an official press release from Pakistan's Interior Ministry, the two leaders agreed to develop a joint rapid response system to counter terrorism, including expanded training programs aimed at strengthening

police capabilities. of information between



Xiaohong commended Pakistan's efforts in combating terrorism and enhancing internal security, expressing appreciation for the country's sacrifices in the fight against terrorism. The ministers also agreed on a joint strategy to improve the professional skills of police and security personnel and pledged to maintain a continuous exchange

relevant institutions of both countries.

Naqvi briefed Xiaohong on measures being taken to safeguard Chinese citizens in Pakistan, with the Chinese minister expressing satisfaction with the steps. "The protection of Chinese citizens and projects of mutual interest remains our top priority," Naqvi said. The two officials

also discussed cooperation in cybercrime prevention. Naqvi highlighted Pakistan's aim to leverage Chinese expertise to enhance the capabilities of the National Cyber Crimes Investigation Agency (NCCIA).

noting that AI-based technologies from China could significantly aid in counterterrorism and security management.

Naqvi also invited the Chinese minister to visit Pakistan and conveyed greetings to China's president and prime minister on behalf of President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

Xiaohong, in turn, invited Naqvi to the Global Security Cooperation Forum scheduled.

Govt to seek relief from IMF for accelerating economic growth, sources

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: According to well-placed sources in the Ministry of Finance, the government is working on seeking relief within the IMF loan programme to accelerate economic growth, attract investment, reduce unemployment and poverty, lower power tariffs, provide tax incentives, and secure a cut in the policy rate. Sources said the government plans to formally request significant changes in the structure of the IMF programme. These proposals have been discussed at the highest level of government and include seeking relaxation.

Five killed, 27 injured as bus plunges into ravine in Chakwal

PEAK POINT

CHAKWAL: At least five people were killed and 27 others injured on Wednesday when a passenger bus plunged into a ravine in the Dhok Pathan area of Chakwal district, rescue officials said. According to Rescue 1122, the bus was travelling from Islamabad to Karachi when the driver reportedly lost control near a sharp bend. The vehicle skidded off the road and fell into a deep gorge. Emergency teams rushed to the site soon after the accident and launched a rescue operation. The injured were pulled from the wreckage and shifted to a nearby hospital.

PTI, Imran's sisters end sit-in outside Adiala jail

PEAK POINT

RAWALPINDI: The sisters of incarcerated PTI leader Imran Khan and party supporters ended their sit-in near Adiala jail late on Tuesday after being given assurances of a meeting with the ex-premier being arranged next week.

In a video posted by Tehreek-i-Tahafuz Ayeen-i-Pakistan (TTAP) on the social media platform X, Imran's sister Aleema said that Mahmood Khan Achakzai had informed them that a meeting would be arranged next week.

Achakzai is the head of the TTAP opposition alliance and chairman of the Pakhtunkhwa Milli Awami Party.

"This is what he reassured us about, that a meeting will be arranged next week," Aleema said, as she

looked at Achakzai, who was standing next to her



along with Majlis Wahdat-i-Muslimeen (MWM) leader Allama Raja Nasir. Achakzai and Nasir had arrived at the site of the protest earlier on Tuesday. "Achakzai sahib has said that because they are saying a meeting will be arranged next week, today we should disperse ourselves before the water cannons show up. That is his advice," she said.

Recently, protests staged by the PTI and Imran's sisters

have been dispersed by authorities with water cannons, which the party has alleged were filled with chemical-laced water.

In another video, she said they were grateful for both Achakzai and Nasir, adding that their presence gave a lot of strength to the protesters.

However, she warned that the protesters would not willingly disperse next

Trump discussing how to acquire Greenland, US military always an option: White House

PEAK POINT

WASHINGTON: The White House said on Tuesday that US President Donald Trump is discussing options for acquiring Greenland, including potential use of the military, in a revival of his ambition to control the strategic island despite European objections.

Trump sees acquiring Greenland as a US national security priority necessary to "deter our adversaries in the Arctic region", the White House said in a statement.

"The president and his team are discussing a range of options to pursue this important foreign policy goal, and of course, utilising the US military is always an option at the commander-in-chief's disposal," the White House said.

Greenland has repeatedly said it does not want to be part of the United States. Leaders from major European powers and Canada rallied behind the Arctic territory on Tuesday, saying it belongs to its people.





SPORTS



Shadab, Abrar, Sahibzada star as Pakistan beat Sri Lanka in first T20I



PEAK POINT COLOMBO: Featuring for Pakistan for the first time since June last year, Shadab Khan impressed with the ball, teaming up with Abrar Ahmed as Pakistan beat Sri Lanka by six wickets in the opening fixture of the three-match Twenty20 International series at the Rangiri Dambulla Cricket Stadium on Wednesday.

The all-rounder took two wickets, while Abrar hunted three victims to restrict Sri Lanka to a paltry 128-run total before Sahibzada Farhan's half century helped Pakistan chase down the target with 20 balls to spare.

Shadab gave away only 25 runs in his four overs, bagging both his wickets in his very first over and could have gone on to take a third had it not been for a dropped catch later on.

Coming into bowl in the seventh over, after Mohammad Wasim and Salman Mirza's pace — that accounted for a wicket for each — saw Sri Lanka post 35-2 in the powerplay, Shadab trapped a sweeping Kusal Mendis lbw and induced an inside edge off Dhananjaya de Silva's bat for wicket-keeper Usman Khan to take a good catch.

With Sri Lanka looking to break the stranglehold while at 59-4 by the halfway stage, it was an opportunity for Abrar to pounce on. The mystery spinner deceived Charith Asalanka into playing a googly across, only to be caught behind, leaving Sri Lanka reeling at 72-5 halfway through the 12th over.

The incoming Wanindu Hasaranga initiated a counter-attack of sorts lofting Abrar for a boundary in the 14th over. Liyanage joined in a slap off Mohammad Nawaz through the covers before dispatching the left-arm spinner past long-on, bringing up the 100-run mark for Sri Lanka. Luck followed for Liyanage as an edge flew off his bat for another boundary as 16 runs came in the 15th over, deceiving Charith Asalanka into playing a googly across, only to be caught behind, leaving Sri Lanka reeling at 72-5 halfway through the 12th over.

Fakhar Zaman at deep cover to depart for 18 off 12, ending the only partnership that looked to threaten Pakistan. Liyanage (40 off 31) followed suit in the 18th finding Nawaz in the deep off the Abrar (3-25) as he tried to clear the long-on fence.

Pakistan's Usman Khan tops FEI Middle East & Africa eventing rankings



PEAK POINT ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's equestrian rider Usman Khan has been ranked No. 1 in the Middle East and Africa Eventing Zone in the 2025 World Rankings released by the International Equestrian Federation (FEI).

The FEI announced the rankings on January 6, placing Usman Khan at the top of the regional standings and elevating Pakistan to the No.1 position in the Middle East and Africa Zone.

Talking to APP on phone from Sydney, Usman Khan termed the achievement a proud moment for the country.

"This is a great honour for me and for Pakistan. Reaching the No.1 position again after my injury makes this achievement even more special," he said.

Usman Khan had earlier dominated the regional rankings from 2019 to 2021, before a serious accident temporarily halted his career. "The journey back was challenging, but I remained focused and committed. I hope this success inspires young riders in Pakistan," he added.

The FEI divides the world into six geographical eventing zones to determine regional leaders and championship rankings.

Noor advances to squash quarterfinal after Egyptian opponent gets aggressive with referee, abandons match



PEAK POINT ISLAMABAD: Tempers flared and expletives were hurled across the squash court faster than the ball as Egyptian squash player Fares Dessouky got into a heated argument with the referee and abandoned the match in the fifth game, which automatically allowed Pakistan's Noor Zaman to advance to the quarterfinal of the Karachi Open.

Home favourite Noor was Pakistan's last hope to make it to the quarterfinals after Ashab Irfan and Nasir Iqbal were eliminated from the tournament earlier in the day.

Noor was two sets down as Dessouky took the first two games 11-8, 11-9.

Tensions had been building throughout the match, with Dessouky questioning how the score had reached 6-4 when it should have been 5-4. Spectators and international athletes alike, as well as squash icon Jahangir Khan sitting front row to the action, murmured that the score should be 5-4.

Dessouky took the second game 11-5. The king of comebacks had clawed his way back to the U23 world title in similar fashion last year after being two games down from his opponent.

Abubakar/Nael win men's doubles title in National Ranking Tennis



Sameer shatters U19 record as Pakistan clinch tri-series title in Harare

PEAK POINT LAHORE: Pakistan Under-19 sealed the tri-series title in emphatic fashion on Tuesday, cruising to a commanding nine-wicket victory over hosts Zimbabwe Under-19 in the final at the Old Hararians Cricket Club in Harare, courtesy of a breathtaking, record-breaking century by Sameer Minhas. Chasing a modest target of 159, Pakistan completed the task in just 16.2 overs, finishing the contest with a staggering 202 balls to spare and underlining their growing dominance at the junior level.

Sameer, the right-handed opener, played a sensational knock of 114 off just 51 balls, peppering the boundary with 17 fours and five towering sixes. The innings marked his second century of the tri-series and rewrote the record books, as he brought up his hundred in only 42 deliveries, the fastest U19 century on record. In doing so, Sameer eclipsed the previous mark held by India's Vaibhav Sooryavanshi, who had scored a 52-ball hundred against England U19 in July 2025. Pakistan captain Farhan Yousaf's decision to

saw them slump to 15-5 inside the first seven overs. Michael Blynnaut offered resistance with a gritty 60 off 102 balls, while Tatenda Chimugoro remained unbeaten on 28. However, regular breakthroughs ensured the hosts were bowled out for 158 in 44.4 overs. Pakistan's reply was nothing short of clinical. Sameer dominated the proceedings, sharing a match-defining 145-run opening partnership with Mohammad Shayan, who played the perfect supporting role, remaining unbeaten on 38 off 42 balls.

Shahnawaz Bhutto XI win ZA Bhutto Shaheed memorial basketball match





Rs 8,000 salaries, black market books, and idle buses: MPs erupt as education system put on trial

NADEEM TANOLI
ISLAMABAD: A Parliament has exposed poverty level teacher wages, unchecked profiteering by private schools, regulatory paralysis, and unsafe public school infrastructure, as lawmakers warned that Pakistan's education system is being run at the cost of teachers, parents, and students while authorities trade explanations instead of solutions. The National Assembly Standing Committee on Federal Education and Professional Training, chaired by Shazia Sobia Aslam Soomro, ordered immediate enforcement of the minimum wage of Rs 37,500 for community teachers and sharply questioned why thousands are still being paid as little as Rs 8,000 to Rs 15,000 per month, well below the legal threshold. Officials confirmed

that while NGOs signing Memorandums of Understanding with the government are now contractually bound to pay the minimum wage, the crisis persists for around 12,000 teachers working under Basic Education Community Schools and 2,500 teachers under the National Commission for Human Development. The committee was told that a summary seeking an additional Rs 4 to 5 billion has been sent to the Finance Division, but lawmakers made it clear that continued delay amounts to state-sanctioned exploitation. The committee's anger intensified when the focus shifted to private schools. Members grilled officials of the Private Educational Institutions Regulatory Authority over annual fee hikes and allegations of vendor monopolies, with parents

reportedly being forced to buy uniforms and books from designated sellers at inflated prices. The chairperson revealed that during visits to Islamabad's F-6 and F-7 markets, textbooks were either unavailable or openly sold on the black market, raising questions about enforcement failure. PEIRA defended fee increases of five to eight percent annually, citing court guidelines, but committee members demanded written clarification, saying parents are confused and schools are exploiting loopholes. Officials also disclosed that PEIRA is currently operating without a permanent chairman, a revelation that lawmakers said explains the regulatory vacuum allowing abuse to flourish. Public sector schools were no exception to scrutiny. The Federal Directorate of Education admitted that a gov-

ernment school in Sawan Garden had to be vacated due to land subsidence, forcing students to relocate to CBR Society. Transport is being provided through Pink Buses, but FDE officials acknowledged that several buses are standing idle due to fuel shortages and lack of drivers, turning a flagship initiative into a half-functioning service. The committee pledged to seek additional funds but warned that safety cannot wait for budget cycles. Infrastructure concerns were compounded by a request for Rs 70 to 80 million to build a retaining wall at the damaged school site, underscoring how neglected maintenance is now translating into emergency spending. The meeting also revisited stalled higher education legislation. The Higher Education Commission informed the committee that

the Westminster University Bill was returned because the institution failed to meet basic requirements related to land ownership and endowment funds. The chair expressed clear dissatisfaction, stating that Parliament cannot be expected to babysit incomplete proposals while students' futures hang in the balance. Due to wider administrative failures, the committee announced that its next meeting will be held on-campus at Federal Urdu University in Karachi for direct oversight. Further concerns were raised by the Special Education wing, which disclosed that several departmental buildings are under unauthorized occupation by other government departments, limiting services for vulnerable students. At the same time, officials highlighted collabora-

tion with NAVTTC to provide skill-based training in modern technologies, including web design, but MPs demanded concrete data on employment outcomes rather than generic claims. The committee was also briefed on the school meal programme, costing around Rs 300 million annually, which has helped reduce dropout rates. However, members flagged persistent vaccine hesitancy among parents, particularly regarding the HPV vaccine, warning that misinformation could undermine public health gains made through schools. The session ended with multiple bills deferred due to absent movers and a strict direction to submit feasibility reports for new schools in B-17 and F-17 sectors without delay.

Judicial officers honored for outstanding performance in Mandi Bahauddin

PEAK POINT
MANDI BHAUDDIN: The dignity and prestige of the District Mandi Bahauddin Judiciary Department were further enhanced as dedicated judicial officers were honored for their exemplary services. A prestigious award ceremony was held in Sub-Division Malakwal, where appreciation certificates were distributed among judicial staff who demon-



strated outstanding performance during the year 2025. The ceremony was attended by Additional District and Sessions Judge Malakwal, Rai Nasir Ahmed; Additional District and Sessions

Judge, Khurram Saleem Mirza; Senior Civil Judge, Aqeel Ahmed Janjua; Civil Judge, Naveed Ahmed Ghuman; and Civil Judge Sub-Division Court Malakwal, Madam Naila

Wali. The honorable judges congratulated the award recipients and paid tribute to their hard work, dedication, and commitment in performing their duties in line with modern judicial

standards. They emphasized that such devoted efforts play a vital role in upholding the credibility and efficiency of the judiciary. On the occasion, the officials were advised to continue

working with honesty, diligence, and devotion to further enhance the good name of the institution, strictly following the vision of District and Sessions Judge Mandi Bahauddin, Nadeem Shaukat. The ceremony concluded with renewed resolve to maintain high professional standards and to serve the cause of justice with integrity and dedication.

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Cleaner energy

PAKISTAN'S decision to seek UNESCO's policy advisory and technical support for developing an energy transition investment plan reflects a growing recognition that the country's shift to renewable energy is critical for ensuring affordable power for economic progress, fiscal and external sector stability and climate resilience. A credible investment framework can help us attract foreign green investment, leverage blended finance models that combine public and philanthropic funds, and access concessional loans and guarantees to make RE projects financially viable, especially for the underserved. Decades of dependence on imported fossil fuels is a key factor behind the repeated exposure of the economy to external shocks, balance-of-payments crises and a power sector debt burden that continues to grow. Against this backdrop, the case for transition is compelling. Pakistan is blessed with abundant solar and wind resources, and the cost of renewable generation has fallen sharply. Though the country should have already been well on its way to a cleaner and cheaper energy mix, progress has been slow due to policy inconsistencies, tariff distortions, financial constraints and the lack of capacity to tap concessional international green capital.

Trumpian imperialism

ZAHID HUSSAIN
THE image of a blindfolded and handcuffed Nicolás Maduro being taken to a prison in New York presented the ugly face of Trumpian imperialism. It is not the first time that the US, in pursuit of regime change, has invaded a sovereign state, but the abduction of the Venezuelan president and his wife is the most brazen instance of imperialistic aggression in recent history. The military action against Venezuela has exposed President Donald Trump, who has, ironically, attempted to present himself as a 'man of peace' in his quest for the Nobel Peace Prize. It is a violation of international law and demonstrates the unravelling of an already collapsing global order or whatever is left of it. Trump has made it clear that America will continue to control the oil-rich country and its resources. "We are going to have a presence in Venezuela as it pertains to oil," Trump said, asserting America's 'right' to the country's oil. After Maduro's removal by force, the American president called a meeting of top American companies to discuss the takeover of Venezuela's oil fields. It is apparent that America's blatant action in Venezuela had nothing to do with sending drugs and criminals to America, as Trump claimed, but rather to capture oil and rich resources. The US president has

pushed the world into extremely dangerous territory. The American military action is hardly a surprise. Trump had increased pressure on Venezuela for the past several months. American air force jets had been bombing alleged drug boats, and killed over 100 people, without providing much evidence to substantiate their claims, in a blatant violation of international law. American forces also intercepted tankers carrying oil from Venezuela. The Trump administration has declared that Maduro was overseeing a "narco-terrorist" organisation. The January invasion was very well planned. Maduro has also been accused by the Trump administration of "Conspiracy to Possess Machineguns and Destructive Devices against the United States". These charges do not justify the invasion and abduction of a head of state. They are just a cover-up for America's unlawful military action. Many analysts believe that even Trump is not serious about the drug charge. For instance, media reports have pointed out that other individuals similarly charged with drug trafficking have received a pardon — among them a Honduran former president extradited to the US. America has frequently attempted regime change in South American countries to protect its oil and other companies and prevent the governments of these states from adopting an independent for-

eign policy trajectory. In fact, American administrations had tried to remove the left-leaning nationalist administrations of Hugo Chávez and his successor Nicolás Maduro for years, but they failed. The US first imposed sanctions against Venezuela during the era of Hugo Chávez. Following the Venezuelan president's death in 2013, the administration of Barack Obama declared Venezuela a "national security threat" and imposed sanctions on certain Venezuelan officials for corruption and rights violations. President Trump's first administration also imposed sanctions, blocking Venezuela's oil exports. Sanctions and other factors have crippled the country's economy and the growing unrest there has seen America capitalising on the situation to attempt regime change. President Joe Biden, for instance, had earlier called an opposition leader the "true winner" of a disputed presidential poll. The latest development in the Venezuela-US timeline is the use of brute force by the Trump administration, which clearly believes that the US is not subject to any international law and has extraordinary powers to raid a country in the dead of night and kidnap its leader, without facing any censure, let alone consequences. Shortly after the operation, Trump stated at a press conference, "We are reasserting American power."

Your AI panic is 200 years' old

YUMNA ZAHID ALI
People love to panic. Every time something new is invented, someone screams, "Oh my God...This will destroy everything!" And now, that loud scream has a new name — Artificial Intelligence. Everywhere you go, people say machines will take over all the jobs, all the creativity, all the power. But here's the truth: machines don't destroy humanity... laziness does. Fear does. The refusal to adapt does. Let's rewind a bit. When electricity replaced candles, candle makers cried because they believed their craft was being erased overnight. But that same change created something far bigger: electricians, light bulb manufacturers, electrical engineers, power plant workers and lighting designers. The world moved from wax and wicks to wires and switches. One job vanished, but a whole new industry was born. When cars replaced horses, blacksmiths protested because shoeing horses and building carriages had been their livelihood. But in place of those horses came an entirely new world: mechanics, car manufacturers, tyre makers, fuel station owners, truck drivers, road builders and traffic engineers. The transportation industry didn't die; it evolved from hoofbeats to engines. When ATMs arrived, people screamed that bank tellers were finished, yet banking grew bigger, creating new roles in digital banking, fraud analysis and financial technology. When elevators became automatic, lift operators vanished, but elevator mechanics, safety engineers and architects took their place. Every single time, people always jump to the worst conclusion. Yet here we are... more employed, more advanced and more connected than ever. The world doesn't collapse when technology rises. It transforms. It rebuilds itself in a new way. Courtesy Tribune

Rabbani urges Senate Chairman to appoint opposition leaders in both houses



PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Former Senate chairman Raza Rabbani has urged the National Assembly speaker and the Senate chairman to move ahead with appointing leaders of the opposition in both houses of Parliament, warning that keeping these positions vacant marginalises dissenting voices.

The offices have remained unfilled since August last year, when then opposition leaders in the National Assembly and Senate — PTT's Omar Ayub and Shibli Faraz — were disqualified by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) after their convictions in cases linked to the May 9, 2023 riots.

Although the PTI has nominated Pakhtunkhwa Milli Awami Party chief Mahmood Khan Achakzai as opposition leader in the National Assembly and Majlis Wahdat-i-Muslimeen's Allama Raja Nasir Abbas for the Senate, their appointments have yet to be officially notified.

In a statement issued on Monday, Rabbani said that "Parliament is incomplete", adding that "this exposes a contradiction in our democracy".

He said that despite frequent claims about the supremacy of Parliament, there is little willingness to truly uphold it.

Noting that the political system is already under pressure due to deep polarisation, Rabbani said that under parliamentary rules, the NA speaker and the Senate chairman are required to appoint opposition leaders, stressing that leaving these posts vacant sidelines dissent.

He cautioned that such actions weaken Parliament and amount to a self-inflicted crisis within a hybrid democratic setup.

Regarding the appointment of the opposition leader in the National Assembly, Speaker Ayaz Sadiq said on Monday that the process would now begin afresh.

He made these remarks during a meeting with PTI Chief Whip Amir Dogar, who met him to raise concerns over the prolonged delay in appointing the opposition leader.

Sadiq told Dogar that the relevant rules on the matter were clear.

During the meeting, Dogar submitted documents confirming the withdrawal of cases involving Omar Ayub from the courts. He also repeated the demand that Achakzai be appointed as the opposition leader.

In response, Sadiq said all steps would be taken strictly in line with the rules, laws and the Constitution, adding that he would brief the House on the issue in the next National Assembly session.

The development came about a month after the National Assembly Secretariat wrote to Dogar seeking details about the status of cases against Ayub.

DPM Dar reviews preparations for 9th OIC Ministerial Conference on Women

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar on Wednesday chaired the committee meeting on preparations for the 9th OIC Ministerial Conference on Women, to be hosted by Pakistan in 2026.

The deputy PM instructed on finalizing arrangements, logistics, and thematic sessions, ensuring smooth organization and close coordination among relevant Ministries and the OIC Secretariat, according to a press statement issued by the Foreign Office.

He highlighted that the upcoming conference reflects



Pakistan's commitment to promoting women's rights and strengthening their role across social, economic, and political spheres. The meeting was attended by the Federal Minister for Law & Justice; SAPM Tariq Bajwa; Secretaries of Foreign Affairs, Cabinet, Human Rights, and other relevant divisions, and senior officials from concerned Ministries.

DAMAC Properties' delegation visits IT Ministry to explore digital, PropTech opportunities

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: A high-level business delegation of Dubai's renowned real estate company DAMAC Properties, led by Sajwani, called on the Federal Minister for Information Technology & Telecommunication, Shaza Fatima Khawaja, to explore collaboration in Pakistan's growing digital and technology ecosystem.

Welcoming the delegation, the Federal Minister underscored that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's Digital Nation Pakistan (DNP) vision forms the foundation of the government's digital policies and reforms, aimed at building an inclusive, innovation-driven digital economy, said a press release here on Wednesday.

The Sajwani delegation was given a comprehensive briefing on Pakistan's digitization vision, with particular emphasis on women's digital and financial inclusion.

Federal Minister Shaza Fatima Khawaja noted that under the Prime Minister's Ramadan Package, 500,000 women were digitally onboarded through BISP by opening digital wallets in just one month, marking a

major step toward financial inclusion.

Moreover, both sides held in depth discussions on outsourcing opportunities, recognition and deployment of Pakistan's tech talent, and the role of property technology (PropTech) and tokenization in unlocking savings, improving efficiency, and increasing liquidity across the real estate and financial sectors.

The DAMAC delegation comprised Ameera Hussain Sajwani (Co-Managing Director, DAMAC Group & CEO, Prypc), Syed Zeeshan Shah Chairman, ONE Group, Aqib Hassan (Chief Commercial Officer, One Homes), and Joseph L. Um (General Manager Tokenisation, Prypc).

The Sajwani delegation praised the talent of Pakistani youth and the country's digitization framework, and expressed strong confidence in Pakistan's vast potential for PropTech, tokenization, and technology-led investment.

Federal Minister of Information Technology & Telecommunication reaffirmed the commitment to facilitate global partnerships, enable innovation.



ISLAMABAD: The Sajwani business delegation of Dubai's renowned real estate company DAMAC Properties, visited the Ministry of IT and Telecom.

Journalist Aslam Shah arrested over defamation charges

PEAK POINT

KARACHI: The National Cyber Crime Investigation Agency (NCCIA) on Wednesday arrested journalist Muhammad Aslam Shah on charges of "defamation through social media".

The agency registered an FIR against Shah on December 29, 2025, under Section 20 (offences against the dignity of a natural person) and Section 24 (cyberstalking) of the Prevention of Electronic Crimes (Amendment) Act, 2025.

Shah has done extensive coverage of Karachi's water issues. In the FIR, a copy of which is available with Dawn, Tabish Raza Husnain, the complainant.

Shah alleged that Shah was "doing defamation propaganda against me and my senior Col. Anjum in different Facebook WhatsApp groups and make false and baseless allegations on me". He also alleged that Shah used "abusive language which caused me significant distress and damage to my reputation". In the FIR, the NCCIA said that the complainant.

US-Pakistan Business Alliance, universities delegation call on KP Governor to explore investment opportunities

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: A delegation comprising members of the US-Pakistan Business Alliance (USPBA) along with students from Yale University and Georgetown University met Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi here on Wednesday to discuss investment opportunities in Pakistan, with a particular focus on Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

During the meeting, both sides exchanged views on enhancing bilateral cooperation in the fields of trade, education, entrepreneurship, information technology, and sustainable investment. The delegation was briefed on the vast investment potential in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, especially in the energy, technology, tourism, and human resource development sectors. The delegation was led by Fasih Haider, President of



Stand with Pakistan USA. Welcoming the participants, Governor Faisal Karim Kundi said that the Government of Pakistan is committed to encouraging foreign investment and strengthening people-to-people and institutional linkages between Pakistan and the United States.

He highlighted Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's strategic location, skilled youth, and emerging sectors as attractive avenues for international investors and academic collaboration.

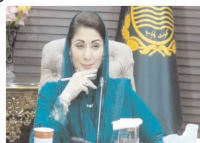
Members of the delegation included Waleed Akram, Madeline Akram.

CM Maryam Nawaz invites DAMAC Group to invest in emerging tech sector

PEAK POINT

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has formally invited the globally renowned DAMAC Group to explore investment opportunities in Punjab.

The invitation was extended during a meeting between the chief minister and a high-level DAMAC Group delegation led by CEO Amira Hussain Sajwani and Managing Director Ali Hussain Sajwani. Maryam Nawaz Sharif warmly welcomed the delegation, who expressed their appreciation for the gracious reception. During the meeting, both sides agreed to accelerate the process of tokenisation of gov-



ernment and commercial assets and discussed strategic investment opportunities across various sectors. A proposal for the pilot tokenisation of commercial assets in Nawaz Sharif IT City was also reviewed. The DAMAC Group delegation showed strong interest in investing in Punjab.

Expressing satisfaction over Punjab's adoption of emerging technologies.

Social media posts case: Imaan, Hadi file application seeking to summon DG ISPR as a witness

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Lawyer and rights activist Imaan Zainab Mazari-Hazir and her husband, Hadi Ali Chattha, submitted an application in an Islamabad court on Wednesday seeking to summon the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) director general (DG ISPR) as a witness in a case registered against them over their social media posts.

In the case, registered with the National Cyber Crime Investigation Agency (NCCIA) under the Prevention of Electronic

Crimes Act 2016 (Peca), Mazari and Chattha have been accused of inciting divisions on linguistic grounds through social media posts and creating the impression that the armed forces were engaged in terrorism within the country.

On Wednesday, the two submitted a written application to Additional District and Sessions Judge Muhammad Afzal Majoka during the hearing of the case, referring to a press conference addressed by the military spokesperson on January 6.



The application said the press briefing was broadcast "on all national media, and the content is readily available online". During the press conference, "references were made to matters directly

pending trial before this learned court".

"This is the exact prosecution case that is pending adjudication before this learned court," the application said.

Mazari and Chattha contended that their request was a "clear requisite of natural justice in line with the Constitutional protection safeguarded for the accused persons with respect to the right to fair trial and due process". The court subsequently directed that a copy of the application be provided to the prosecution and said a decision on the request would be made after it heard the prosecution.

Later, the court said it was issue a decision on the application after the statements of the accused were

recorded under Section 342 of the Criminal Procedure Code.

During the proceedings, prosecution witness Shahroz Riaz was also cross-examined. He made several admissions regarding the manner in which the inquiry in the case was initiated and the collection of social media content. The hearing has been adjourned till January 8. The case stems from a complaint filed on Aug 12, 2025 at the NCCIA, Islamabad. The complaint accused Mazari of disseminating and "propagating narratives.