



**President Zardari chairs PPP meeting in Lahore, stresses unity, resilience amid national challenges**



**Ahsan Iqbal calls on chief adviser Bangladesh**



**Daniyal Ch calls for NEPRA prosumer review to empower solar consumers**

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## PM reaffirms Pakistan's support for IAEA in promoting responsible use of nuclear technology

**PEAK POINT**  
ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif has reaffirmed Pakistan's strong support for the role of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in the promotion of responsible use of nuclear technology in areas such as cancer diagnosis and treatment, agriculture, nuclear power generation and industrial applications.

He was talking to Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Rafael Mariano Grossi at Vienna International Centre (VIC), the seat of the UN offices in Vienna, a press release issued by the PM House Media Wing on Tuesday.

Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar,

Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister Syed Tariq Fatemi and Foreign Secretary Amna Baloch were also present during the meeting.

During the meeting, the prime minister praised the strong partnership between Pakistan and the IAEA, while observing that Pakistan was not only a beneficiary of the IAEA's Technical Cooperation Programme but was also contributing to the work of the IAEA through the provision of its experts and conducting international trainings for IAEA Member States. Director General Grossi acknowledged Pakistan's experience and expertise in the peaceful uses of nuclear technology and the high quality of its engineers.



VIENNA: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif met the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Mr Rafael Mariano Grossi at the Vienna International Centre (VIC).

## 11 security personnel martyred in terrorist attack on checkpoint in Bajaur: ISPR



**PEAK POINT**  
BAJAUR: A terrorist attack, using an explosive-laden vehicle, on a checkpoint in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Bajaur district martyred 11 security personnel, the military's media wing said on Tuesday.

According to the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), "On February 16, a cowardly terrorist attack was attempted on security forces and law enforcement agencies' joint check Post in Bajaur District by Khwarij belonging to Indian Proxy, Fitna al Khwarij".

Fitna-al-Khwarij is a term that the state uses for the banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan.

The statement added that 12 terrorists were eliminated after security forces retaliated and "engaged the fleeing khwarij with precision".

"In their desperation, the attackers rammed an explosive-laden vehicle into the perimeter wall. Due to the blast impact infrastructure at check post collapsed resultantly eleven brave sons of soil, rendered the ultimate sacrifice and [embracing] martyrdom."

## Bangladesh PM-to-be Tarique Rahman and lawmakers sworn into parliament

**PEAK POINT**  
BANGLADESH: Bangladesh's prime minister-to-be Tarique Rahman and lawmakers were sworn into parliament on Tuesday, becoming the first elected representatives since a deadly 2024 uprising.

Rahman is set to take over from an interim government that has steered the country of 170 million people for 18 months since the autocratic government of Sheikh Hasina was overthrown. The lawmakers, who promised loyalty to Bangladesh, were sworn in by the Chief Election Commissioner AMM Nasir Uddin.

Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) lawmakers are expected to formally



elect Rahman as their leader, with President belongs to democracy," he said in his victory speech on Saturday.

"This victory belongs to people who aspire to and have sacrificed for democracy." But he has also warned of the challenges ahead, including tackling the economic woes of the world's second-largest garment exporter.

"We are about to begin our journey in a situation marked by a fragile economy left behind by

the authoritarian regime, weakened constitutional and statutory institutions, and a deteriorating law and order situation", he added in his victory speech.

The new leader has pledged to restore stability and revive growth after months of turmoil that rattled investor confidence in the world's second-largest garment exporter.

He has also called for all parties to "remain united" in a country polarised by years of bitter rivalry. "Peaceful opposition" Rahman's win marks a remarkable turnaround for a man who only returned to Bangladesh in December after 17 years in exile in Britain, far from Dhaka's political storms.

## Sri Lankan president orders immediate resolution of visa issues for Pakistanis

**PEAK POINT**  
COLOMBO: Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Dissanayake has ordered immediate removal of all difficulties faced by Pakistanis in obtaining visas. The order was issued when Interior Minister Mobsin Naqvi and Minister for Overseas Pakistanis Chaudhry Saik Hussain held a meeting with the Sri Lanka president.

During the meeting, President Dissanayake appreciated Pakistan's support to his country during difficult times. The interior minister also informed the Sri Lankan president.

## Mohsin Naqvi rejects PTI founder health rumours

**PEAK POINT**  
LAHORE: Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi has dismissed reports regarding the eye condition of the founder of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), terming them as propaganda and misinformation.

Addressing a press conference, Naqvi said that for the past four to five days, certain political narratives had been circulating about the PTI founder's health.

He stated that exaggerated claims were made, including assertions that the founder had lost 85 percent of his eyesight or that one of his eyes had been completely damaged.

## TTAP sit-in enters 5th day as opposition alliance mulls future course of action

**PEAK POINT**  
ISLAMABAD: As the TTAP's sit-in entered its fifth day and the blocked routes to Parliament House were cleared, the party expressed hope on Tuesday that at least one family member of the incarcerated PTI founder Imran Khan or a party leader would be allowed to meet him today.

The opposition decided to extend their sit-in, which began on Friday, for another day to "see the government's response" to their demand for access to the former premier, whose health has recently been called into question by a medical report following his examination at the Adiala jail on Sunday.

TTAP spokesperson Akhunda Hussain Ahmed Yousafzai, speaking to Dawn, said that as



Imran, two of the sit-in participants — Salman Akram Raja and Barrister Gohar Ali Khan — would be going to Adiala jail, as their names had been included in the list of those to meet the PTI founder. "Moreover, we are hoping that the meeting of all sisters or at least one of the family members will be allowed

today," he said. "It will end be a meeting day with the rumours about the rect.

"It is a fact that during the last two years we have been deceived a number of times, due to which the level of trust has been reduced," he said.

The spokesperson added that the family needed to meet Imran, after which the three sisters would hold a press conference.

The spokesperson further said he met KP Chief Minister Sohail Afridi last night, where it was decided to hold an evening meeting to determine the next course of action.

"During the meeting, we will consider the next phase of our sit-in and movement," he added.

Imran's family and associates had been barred from visiting him for several weeks until the Supreme Court's (SC).

## FMs of eight Muslim states condemn Israel's decision to designate WB lands as "state land"



**PEAK POINT**  
ISLAMABAD: The foreign ministers of Pakistan, Egypt, Jordan, United Arab Emirates, Indonesia, Türkiye, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar on Tuesday strongly condemned the decision by Israel to designate lands in the occupied West Bank as so-called "state land." The foreign ministers, in a joint statement, also condemned Israel's decision to approve procedures for the registration and settlement of land ownership across extensive areas of the occupied West Bank for the first time since 1967. "This illegal step constitutes a grave escalation aimed at accelerating illegal settlement activity, land confiscation, entrenching Israeli control, and applying unlawful Israeli sovereignty over the Occupied Palestinian Territory and undermining the legitimate rights of the Palestinian.



# SPORTS



## Australia, Ireland out of T20 World Cup as Zimbabwe qualify after washout



**PEAK POINT**  
DUBAI: The 2021 champions Australia were knocked out of the T20 World Cup on Tuesday, with Zimbabwe qualifying for the Super Eights after their match against Ireland was washed out without a ball being bowled in Kandy.

Zimbabwe joined Sri Lanka as qualifiers from Group B and will move on to face the West Indies, India and South Africa in the next phase. Ireland were also eliminated. Persistent drizzle all day at the Pallekelle stadium kept the covers on and the umpires finally called it off at 5:30pm local time (1200

GMT) with no prospect of beginning the minimum five-over match before the 6:10pm cut-off time. Australia, who had been beaten by Sri Lanka and Zimbabwe, needed an Ireland victory to keep their hopes alive. Zimbabwe are now on an unsailable five points with a game to still to come, while Ireland are third on three points.

Australia, on two points, have one game remaining against Oman on Friday, but cannot overtake Zimbabwe.

Australia had a shambolic build-up to the tournament They

lost leading pace bowlers Pat Cummins and Josh Hazlewood to injury, while captain Mitchell Marsh missed the first two games after being hit in the groin in training and suffering testicular bleeding.

Test great Steve Smith was left out despite being in terrific form top of the order in the Big Bash League and his expertise in playing against spin bowling.

He flew in as cover last week and was formally added to the Australia squad at the weekend.

But then he was left out for the must-win game against Sri Lanka on Monday which saw an

Australia middle-order collapse as they lost by eight wickets.

Zimbabwe captain Skiender Raza hailed his side's achievement in reaching the last eight, but warned there were tougher battles to come.

"We have come this far. We will celebrate but we have a game against Sri Lanka to come," said Raza.

"This is only a tick in the box and this is not the only thing that we set out for. Everyone loves an underdog story."

Ireland skipper Lorcan Tucker was downcast after his side did not get to play.

## Afridi calls for major shake-up in Pakistan XI ahead of Namibia Clash



**PEAK POINT**  
KARACHI: Former Pakistan captain Shahid Afridi has urged team management to bench senior players Babar Azam, Shaheen Afridi and Shadab Khan following Pakistan's defeat to India in the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026 at R. Premadasa Stadium on Sunday. Speaking on a local television channel, Shahid Afridi called for sweeping changes ahead of Pakistan's final group-stage match against Namibia. "If I were to make the decision, I would bench Babar, Shaheen and Shadab. I would play the new boys, back the youngsters and give them confidence," Afridi said.

He questioned the continued reliance on experienced players despite inconsistent performances in key matches. "If seniors are not delivering, why not give those sitting outside an opportunity?" he added.

Pakistan, who won the toss and opted to field, deployed a spin-heavy attack but struggled to contain India. A blistering half-century from Ishan Kishan powered India to 175-5 in 20 mins. Pakistan's spinners, including Abrar Ahmed and Shadab Khan, went wicketless, while Shaheen returned 1-31. In reply, Pakistan were bowled out for 114 in 18 overs after losing early wickets.

## Pakistan 'A' qualifies for ACC Women's Asia Cup Rising Stars semis



**PEAK POINT**  
ISLAMABAD: Pakistan 'A' sealed their semi-final berth with a dominating nine-wicket win over United Arab Emirates (UAE) in the final Group A match in ACC Women's Asia Cup Rising Stars here at the Terdthai Cricket Ground in Bangkok on Tuesday afternoon.

According to details, after being asked to bat first, UAE were bowled out for a meagre 79 in

17.2 overs, which were confirmed on Wednesday.

Pakistan were required to chase in 15.5 overs or less to qualify for the semi-final. Pakistan 'A' and UAE finished with four points each but Pakistan maintained a better net run-rate after chasing the target in 11 overs.

The semifinals will be played on Friday, February 20. The two semi-finalists from the Group B are

Shawaal finished with 38 not out off 31 balls hitting five fours and one six, while

Huraina hit five fours in her 19-ball 26 not out.

Heena Hotchandani picked up the only wicket for UAE. Earlier, player of the match Anousha Nasir picked up three for 18 to leave UAE 58-5 in 10.1 overs. Waheeda Akhtar drew the first blood as she castled Esha Oza for a mere three. Opening batter Theertha Satish top-scored with a five fours-laden 27-ball 32. Rinita Rajith was the only other UAE batter to enter double figures as she contributed 14 off 19 balls hitting two fours. UAE lost five for 11 in the end as skipper Hafsa Khalid picked up two for four in her two overs, while Gull Rukh and Momina Riasat dismissed one batter each.

## Usman Tariq confident Pakistan can bounce back after India drubbing in T20 World Cup



## PFF to make debut in FIFA and UEFA events, focuses on league development

**PEAK POINT**  
LAHORE: Pakistan Football Federation (PFF) President Syed Mohsen Gilani on Monday reaffirmed his commitment to rebuilding football in the country, announcing that Pakistan will participate in FIFA and UEFA events for the first time in its history. Addressing a press conference at the Karachi Press Club following the conclusion of the National Challenge Cup, Gilani said that since assuming office as the federation's first elected president following a prolonged period under a F I F A - a p p o i n t e d Normalisation Committee, his priority has been institutional reform. "Since I took over, the aim has been to put better systems in place that ensure the growth of football in the country," he said. Highlighting progress under his leadership, the PFF president pointed to the men's national team's maiden participation in the

AFC Futsal Championship Coast during the FIFA Series. He also described the Under-16 team's participation in a UEFA event as another first for Pakistan football.

On the domestic front, the PFF chief termed the recently concluded National Challenge



maximum exposure for our teams," he said, adding that efforts are ongoing to arrange more international friendlies for the men's squad. Calling it a landmark moment, Gilani noted that the women's national team would compete against Turks and Caicos Islands, Mauritania and Ivory

Cup, won by WAPDA, as the first step toward restoring structured competitions. He confirmed that talks with the government are underway to revive departmental teams and that plans to launch a professional league are progressing, with potential commercial partners shortlisted.

## Lions team lifts Inter University Tenpin Bowling League Trophy 2026



**PEAK POINT**  
ISLAMABAD: The Lions team lifted the Inter University Tenpin Bowling League trophy-2026 here at Leisure City Bowling Club, Safa Gold, F-7 Markaz. The Panthers and

Scorpions got 2nd and 3rd positions, respectively. President, Pakistan Tenpin Bowling Federation Ijaz-ur-Rehman, Secretary General Maqbool Arian was the chief guest at the concluding ceremony and distributed medals and certificates to the positions holders. President, Pakistan Tenpin Bowling Federation Ijaz-ur-Rehman, Secretary General Maqbool Arian was the chief guest at the concluding ceremony and distributed medals and certificates to the positions holders. President, Pakistan Tenpin Bowling Federation Ijaz-ur-Rehman, Secretary General Maqbool Arian was the chief guest at the concluding ceremony and distributed medals and certificates to the positions holders.

Association, Rana Tanveer Ahmed, President, Mardan Students Olympic Association, Fida Muhammad were also present on the occasion. The Lions team got 1st position with 651 points and Panthers team obtained 2nd position with 612 points. Scorpions bagged 3rd position. The winning Lions team, included Daniyal Ijaz, Saad Rehman, Aahab, Mubashara Abbasi and Manahil Ikhlaiq.



## Border Security Projects, Zaireen Facilities and Rangers Accommodation Dominate PSDP Scrutiny in Interior Committee

**NADEEM TANOLI**  
ISLAMABAD: A detailed review of development proposals for border security forces, Rangers formations and key infrastructure projects unfolded during a meeting of the Standing Committee on Interior and Narcotics Control, where officials admitted that several previously recommended projects had failed to secure approval despite repeated submissions. Chaired by Raja Khurram Shahzad Nawaz, the committee sought a comprehensive briefing from the Secretary Ministry of Interior and Narcotics Control and heads of attached departments regarding their Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) proposals for the financial year 2026-27. The Chairman directed departments to present concise justifications for funding, emphasizing clarity over lengthy technical pre-

sentations. The discussion revealed that multiple projects recommended in previous years, particularly for Frontier Corps (FC) formations, were not approved by the Planning authorities. Colonel Kashif, representing FC Balochistan North, informed the committee that projects endorsed earlier had not even received Planning Commission approval. The Secretary Interior clarified that while the Ministry forwards all committee-backed proposals to Planning, final decisions rest with budgetary authorities and are often constrained by limited allocations. Officials from FC Balochistan North stated that current priorities have shifted toward construction of border posts and wings necessitated by evolving security dynamics along the Pak Afghan frontier. Similarly, FC Balochistan South outlined its responsibilities along approximately 850

kilometers of Afghanistan and Iran borders, highlighting infrastructure needs including border posts, Wing Headquarters and an FC Hospital. Committee members revisited concerns raised in earlier sessions regarding facilities for Zaireen at Taftan. Members recalled that pilgrims had previously remained stranded for days without proper shelter or sanitation facilities. While officials stated that accommodation for approximately 1,000 individuals already exists at Taftan and another facility was constructed several hundred kilometers away, the committee pressed for a reassessment to ensure adequate arrangements. FC KP North reported that its strength was enhanced from 19 to 51 wings in 2016, with 31 new Wing Headquarters required. However, only 15 have been constructed to date. The representative disclosed that FC KP North

received no PSDP funding in the last two fiscal years despite facing four major standoffs with the interim Afghan administration in 2024 and 2025, which necessitated additional troop deployments. FC KP South, though not represented in person, was also reported to have received no funds last year. Punjab Rangers presented three major proposals, including accommodation for five wings currently living in temporary huts or tents, restoration of 16 to 20 Border Out Posts damaged by floods, and accommodation for Junior Commissioned Officers, which presently stands at only one to two percent coverage across the force. Sindh Rangers similarly sought approval of PC-1s for ten new quarters, border outposts and barracks to strengthen forward bases. The broader budget discussion exposed systemic challenges in the PSDP process.

Members questioned the gap between projected demand, allocation and actual release of funds. The Minister explained that projects are first submitted as projected demand, followed by allocation by Planning and Finance divisions, and finally quarterly release based on revenue performance. He noted that if revenue targets are not met, final quarter releases are often curtailed. Citing an example, officials stated that a 14 billion rupee project for Islamabad jails received only 2 billion in allocation, insufficient even for boundary wall construction. Members argued that approving partial funding against large PC-1 costs leads to inefficiencies and prolonged project timelines. The Minister reported that last year the Ministry utilized 97 percent of released funds and projected similar performance for the current

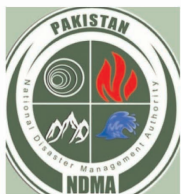
fiscal year. The committee also examined narcotics rehabilitation infrastructure. In response to a question regarding facilities for minors affected by drug abuse, the Minister confirmed the existence of rehabilitation centers, including one in Islamabad expanding from 45 to 100 beds. However, he emphasized that healthcare falls under provincial jurisdiction following the 18th Constitutional Amendment, limiting federal intervention. In a separate intervention, the Chairman raised the issue of a crucial road project in Islamabad Gate No. 1 to Gate No. 3, currently narrowed due to encroachments. He warned that delay would make future clearance more difficult once population expands. The Minister assured the committee that the recommendation would be incorporated.

## NDMA forecasts pleasant Ramadan weather with warm days, cool nights

**PEAK POINT**  
ISLAMABAD: The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) has forecast generally pleasant weather conditions across the country during the holy month of Ramadan, with daytime temperatures expected to rise gradually while

nights will remain relatively cool. According to the National Emergencies Operation Center (NEOC), most parts of the country are likely to experience dry weather during the first ten days of Ramadan, with light rain expected in the northern and western regions. Nights will

remain cold in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Gilgit-Baltistan and northern Balochistan. During the second ten days of the month, the weather is likely to turn relatively warmer, with rain forecast at isolated places in northern areas, central Punjab and Potohar. At some locations,



gusty winds and thunderstorms are also likely. In the third ten days of Ramadan, rainfall is expected in different parts of the country, with intermittent showers forecast for northern Pakistan and central Punjab. A significant rise in temperatures is anticipated in southern Punjab, Sindh and

Balochistan by the end of Ramadan. The NDMA's National Emergencies Operation Center is providing timely alerts to the public and relevant institutions regarding the expected weather situation and potential risks, ensuring preparedness and safety during the holy month.

# Opinion & Editorial

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## Crumbling under pressure

**A**FTER so much happened off the field, it was ultimately a mismatch on it. Pakistan were once again second-best against India, outplayed and outsmarted; and once again, they suffered an all-to-familiar batting collapse that meant they were never in the chase. Sahibzada Farhan, Saim Ayub, skipper Salman Ali Agha and Babar Azam all succumbed to the pressure, leaving Pakistan 34-4 in their pursuit of a winning 176. They eventually folded for 114; only Usman Khan offered a semblance of resistance with 44. The defeat once again raises questions about Pakistan's mental strength, especially when they come up against their arch-rivals. The team went ahead with the match against India only after protracted talks between the Pakistan Cricket Board and the International Cricket Council regarding Bangladesh's ouster from the tournament after the latter refused to play in India and following Pakistan's victories against the Netherlands and the US. But they were unable to sustain the winning streak and the loss means they cannot afford any slip-up against Namibia in their final group game. The US, who have finished their group commitments, are second in the table with four points and a better net run rate than Pakistan.

## Two years of harm

**O**ONLY two years into its rule, the current hybrid set-up, with a dubious electoral mandate, has already created massive difficulties. To keep the review fair and wide, I use an analytical lens that I have used previously to judge past set-ups as well: a set-up's outcomes accrue in the political, economic, security and foreign realms and derive from its policies which in turn are rooted in the merit of its team. The current dispensation's worst outcomes are political — worse than those of past civilian set-ups. Electorally, it has attained two-thirds majority through controversial polls and court verdicts and has given extensions to favoured election officials via questionable laws for future polls. Legislatively, parliament has come to act as a mere rubber stamp for the executive and has passed laws that have made judicial processes a mere rubber stamp as well. Legitimate oppositional processes have been curbed with much of the top leadership of the PTI, BYC and PTM in jail or underground or forced to defect because of biased accountability processes. Free speech and other rights have also taken a hit via draconian legal changes, resulting in the shocking 17-year jail verdict against plucky rights activists Imaan Mazari-Hazir and Hadi Ali Chatha merely on the basis of tweets.

There have been major follies and failures in all areas. Even worse, civilian sway is at its lowest ebb since 2002-07; civilians, too, have become mere rubber stamps for other forces. In two years, these acts have turned us into democracy's ground zero. The setbacks, especially on the judicial front, have put us back politically by decades and it's hard to plot a path back to even basic democracy anytime soon. Economically, the current set-up has presided over the highest inflation, unemployment and poverty figures in decades. While no doubt this reflects the follies of past rulers as well, the current government's own actions have made things much worse. For instance, it failed to provide any major relief to the masses as it unleashed harsh IMF therapy that merely ensured economic stabilisation. Even with inflation going down, the people continue to struggle. What is worse is that the decision-makers seem utterly clueless about how to build on stabilisation to achieve durable growth in order to aid recovery. Instead of industrialisation, they are chasing dubious avenues such as crypto, corporate farming, mining and remittances that could, in fact, undermine industrial growth and exports. Reforms in key areas such as the power sector, state units, taxes and tariffs remain anaemic. In fact, steps

like the sale of PIA and the new solar policy have evoked criticism. The security situation has grown worse largely on account of TTP and BLA terrorist attacks — both in terms of the attacks' frequency and brazenness, which has resulted in significant human casualties. But here too, the state appears clueless. For instance, major operations, eviction of Afghan refugees, trade and travel bans, etc. have not yielded the desired outcome against the TTP. In the case of Balochistan, the neglect of the root causes of economic and political exclusion and the crackdown on even peaceful protests is only worsening matters. On the foreign policy front, superficially, we are in the rare, sweet spot of having strong ties with both superpowers — China and the US. But some discerning analysts believe that ties with China, which offers Pakistan reliability and a clear route to industrialisation, are slowing down while re-relationships with the US, which offers fickle ties focused on security quagmires, are growing. This reflects our perennial tragedy as a state unable to capitalise on serious economic avenues and thus keen on getting into security tangles to survive on geostrategic rents. So, as in the realm of defence, here too we see the footprint of the security state in the lead. Courtesy Dawn

## Fixing welfare leaks

**A**TIF MEHMOOD  
Welfare money is rarely discussed in formal terms. People do not call it social protection or fiscal policy; they call it flour, school fees, petrol for the bike, tablets for a father whose blood pressure will not wait. In 2025 the government is putting close to 2.8 trillion rupees into welfare and relief. The Benazir Income Support Programme alone now reaches more than 9.3 million households. That kind of scale is necessary, but it also leaves little room for error. When mistakes happen, they grow fast. Audits suggesting around 141 billion rupees were lost to fraud and errors are not just figures on a page. That money has a face. It is the grocery list that got shorter. The bill that stayed unpaid. This is where artificial intelligence has started to slip into the conversation. Not loudly, and not as a magic fix. More like a practical tool doing work people simply cannot keep up with. Welfare systems today sit on piles of data. Identity cards, phone numbers, bank transfers, household records. Caseworkers deal with hundreds of files while deadlines close in and phones keep ringing. Under that pressure, things get missed. AI does not solve the problem, but it notices patterns quickly. One phone number linked to several families. The same address appearing again and again. Payments moving through the same agents month after month. None of this proves fraud on its own, but it raises flags early. During recent flood relief and heat emergency payments, these checks mattered. AI-based screening stopped thousands of questionable applications before money went out. Officials involved have admitted that in earlier disasters many of those payments would have gone through. There simply was no time to look closely. Speed mattered more than accuracy. This time, filtering happened quietly in the background. Courtesy Tribune

## Commerce Minister chairs high-level meeting on Potato surplus, export enhancement



PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan chaired a high-level meeting to review the situation arising from surplus potato production in the country and to devise a coordinated strategy for enhancing exports while protecting the interests of farmers. The meeting was attended by senior officials from

the Federal Government and the Government of Punjab. Rana Ihsaan Afzal Khan, Coordinator to the Prime Minister, and Secretary of Commerce Jawad Paul also participated in the discussions, said a release issued here on Tuesday.

Participants examined updated production estimates, domestic market conditions, export performance, and logistical challenges.

It was noted that an expansion in cultivation area, along with carry-over stocks from the previous season, has led to surplus availability, placing pressure on farm-gate prices amid challenging global market conditions.

During the meeting, the Minister emphasized that the primary impact of the surplus is being felt by farmers due to depressed prices, and therefore, any support mechanism should prioritize direct assistance to farmers rather than artificial price interventions that may distort the market. He

observed that sustainable solutions must be market-aligned and fiscally responsible.

The discussion also focused on improving export competitiveness, particularly in Central Asian and other emerging markets.

It was agreed that a targeted and time-bound freight facilitation mechanism could be evaluated, subject to fiscal feasibility and clearly defined benchmarks, to help exporters manage rising logistics costs without creating long-term distortions.

The Minister further directed that business-to-business engagements with key destinations, including Central Asia, the Middle East, and Asia-Pacific markets, be intensified to expand buyer linkages and diversify export destinations.

He stressed the importance of coordinated and data-driven decision-making between the Federal Government and the Government of Punjab.

## President Zardari chairs PPP meeting in Lahore, stresses unity, resilience amid national challenges

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari, Tuesday, chaired a meeting of Pakistan Peoples Party's local and provincial leadership at Bilawal House in Lahore and discussed internal party affairs as well as the overall political and economic situation in the country.

Divisional and district presidents of the party, members of the PPP Central Punjab Executive Committee, and newly appointed office-bearers of the Central Punjab districts attended the meeting, President Secretariat Media Wing said in a press release. In his remarks, the president emphasised the importance of political dialogue and unity and said that democratic engagement was the strongest instrument for justice, national cohesion and progress. He also noted the need for perseverance in pub-



lic service and constructive politics. The president observed that Pakistan faced economic pressures and political challenges, adding that addressing these challenges required patience and sustained effort from party workers and leadership. The president observed that strengthening agriculture and supporting economic stability are vital for national growth and asked for continued focus on these sectors. He underlined that the PPP remains committed to its founding principles and the legacy of its historic leadership.

## PNS Khaibar visits International Islamic Port of Jeddah

PEAK POINT

JEDDAH, SAUDI ARABIA: The newly commissioned state-of-the-art Pakistan Navy Ship Khaibar visited Saudi Arabia's International Islamic Port of Jeddah.

During the goodwill visit at the International Islamic Port of Jeddah, the Consul General of Pakistan Syed Mustafa Rabbani and Captain Ali Raza, Commanding Officer of Pakistan PNS Khyber, hosted a grand reception-cum-dinner on the deck of the ship on the evening of Monday, (February 16), in which Consul General of Pakistan Syed Mustafa Rabbani, dignitaries of the Pakistani community, officers of The Royal Saudi Naval Force and officers of the Consulate General of Pakistan Jeddah



attended. The ceremony began with the national anthems of Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. Captain Ali Raza delivered a welcome speech and thanked all the guests for their participation. He said that PNS Khaibar has recently been taken from Turkey, and this is its first visit. PNS Khaibar is fully equipped with modern warfare capabilities and has been named PNS Khyber in honor of the Khyber Fort in Madinah al-Munawwarah.

## Daniyal Ch calls for NEPRA prosumer review to empower solar consumers

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Parliamentary Secretary for Information and Broadcasting, Barrister Daniyal Chaudhry, chaired a briefing for parliamentarians on the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) Prosumer Regulation 2026 at the Parliamentary Forum on Energy and Economy in Islamabad, urging the government to review the rules to safeguard the interests of solar energy users nationwide.

The session brought together lawmakers, energy experts, and policy makers to examine the rapid rise of rooftop solar panels in Pakistan, its impact on electricity users, and the need to balance grid stability with consumer protection.

Speaking at the briefing, Barrister Daniyal praised Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif for taking immediate notice of the

new regulations and stressed that they must protect citizens who have invested their hard earned money in solar energy.

"The public has installed solar panels with their own savings. They expect affordable, reliable electricity, and NEPRA regulations should encourage solar adoption rather than hinder it," he said. Experts highlighted potential effects of the new net metering and net billing rules, warning that overly strict regulations could drive many solar users to disconnect from the national grid entirely.

Barrister Daniyal underscored that parliament, as the representative of the people, must ensure solar regulations promote growth, fairness, and energy security, and urged the government to act swiftly in the public interest.

The briefing was attended by parliamentarians, energy specialists, and policy makers.

## Gilani condemns Bannu blast, expresses solidarity with victims' families

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate Syed Yousef Raza Gilani on Tuesday strongly condemned the bomb blast near Police Station Miryan in Bannu.

In a statement, he expressed heartfelt sympathy and condolences to the families of those martyred in the explosion, saying he shared their grief in this hour of sorrow.

The Senate chairman prayed that Allah Almighty may grant the martyrs the highest place in Jannat-ul-Firdous and bestow patience and fortitude upon their families to bear this irreparable loss.

He also prayed for the speedy recovery of the injured and directed the relevant authorities to ensure the provision of the best possible medical treatment to those wounded in the incident. Gilani said such cowardly acts of terrorism could not weaken the nation's resolve. He emphasized that collective efforts would continue until the complete eradication of terrorism from the country. He also paid tribute to the sacrifices of law enforcement.



ISLAMABAD: Parliamentary Secretary for Information & Broadcasting, Barrister Daniyal Chaudhry, briefed the parliamentarians on the new NEPRA Prosumer Regulation.

## Ahsan Iqbal calls on chief adviser Bangladesh

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives, Prof. Ahsan Iqbal, who is in Dhaka to attend the oath taking ceremony of Prime Minister-Elect of Bangladesh, Tarique Rahman, called on Chief Advisor of Bangladesh Professor Muhammad Yunus.

During the meeting, he congratulated Professor Yunus and people of Bangladesh on successful conduct of elections and thanked him for strengthening bilateral relations between Pakistan and Bangladesh across various spheres including trade, people



to people contacts, revival of direct air connectivity, according to press release issued by Planning Ministry.

The Minister also apprised Prof. Yunus regarding the Allama Muhammad Iqbal Scholarships under Pakistan-Bangladesh Knowledge Corridor and noted that first batch of the awardees.

## Experts call for 'One-Stop' crisis centers to combat VAW as cybercrime surges

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Experts and digital rights advocates have stressed the need for an urgent overhaul of Pakistan's cyber-governance, suggesting the establishment of "One-Stop Crisis Centers" to combat a staggering rise in technology-facilitated violence against women and girls (TFVAW).

The call was made during a high-level seminar hosted by the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) here where-in participants highlighted that cybercrime complaints in Pakistan reached a record

high of 171,000 in 2025, marking a sharp escalation from 102,000 just five years ago. Dr Razia Safdar, SDPI's Senior Policy Advisor, emphasized that though the government is promoting digital transformation, the lack of safety is creating a "new frontier of violence." She cited global data showing that 67% of women are affected by online misinformation and 66% experience cyber harassment. "Online harassment is no longer confined to the digital space; it translates into real-life threats," Dr Safdar warned, noting that AI-driven threats like deepfakes and manipulated



content are causing irreversible emotional and reputational harm. Fahmida Khan, Deputy Country Representative for UN Women Pakistan, shared a harrowing personal experience where her own photograph was misused on an

online platform. "If individuals in professional positions can be exploited so easily, the risk for women in rural areas is catastrophic," she stated. Ms Khan highlighted that 99% of non-consensual deepfake pornography targets women, yet

many are silenced by cultural stigma and a lack of policy specifically addressing tech-facilitated gender-based violence. Dr Syed Kaleem Imam, the SDPI Visiting Fellow and former IG Police, criticized the existing infrastructure, noting that while Islamabad has introduced modern "facilitation centers," much of the country lacks specialized units for gender-sensitive interviewing. He debunked the myth that cybercrime is untraceable, stating that "every digital act leaves a forensic footprint," but admitted that law-enforcement needs better training in trauma-informed approaches.

Muhammad Akram Mughal, the Deputy Director of National Cyber Crime Investigation (NCCI), revealed the immense pressure on state resources. While complaints have surged, the conviction rate for cybercrime in Pakistan remains a low 3.7 per cent.

"Our investigators are overwhelmed. Under international standards, one officer should handle 10 cases; in Pakistan, they are managing over 400 each," Mughal explained. Despite these hurdles, he noted that over 250 awareness seminars in universities have helped reduce certain incidents by 30 per cent.