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Pakistan marks major progress in digital and telecom sectors: Shaza

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President Zardari offers expansion of defence collaboration, production to Qatari emir

PEAK POINT

DOHA: President Asif Ali Zardari met with Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani in Doha on Wednesday and offered to expand bilateral cooperation in the areas of defence and defence production between Pakistan and Qatar, a statement issued by the Presidency said.

According to the statement, the Qatari emir "responded positively" to the offer and said he would instruct the relevant authorities to initiate discussions with Pakistan in this regard immediately.

The statement further said that the Qatari leader "expressed satisfaction at the recent Pakistan-Saudi Arabia defence agreement," which was signed in September.

"It was a welcome and timely step that should have happened earlier," the statement quoted al-Thani as saying. He also noted Pakistan's "unique position as a country maintaining strategic ties with China, the West and the Gulf states at the same time".

On the matter of recent clashes between Pakistan and Afghanistan, the Qatari emir expressed "hope that Pakistan and Afghanistan would resolve their current issues and move beyond recent challenges".

Qatar is one of the two mediators in talks between Pakistan and the Afghan Taliban, which were held in Doha and Istanbul following border clashes between the two sides last month. Another round of talks between them is set to begin tomorrow (Nov 6) in the Turkish capital.



DOHA: President Asif Ali Zardari in a meeting with His Highness Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, Amir of the State of Qatar, at the Amiri Palace.

'The name is Mamdani': Democrat Zohran elected New York City's first Muslim mayor

PEAK POINT

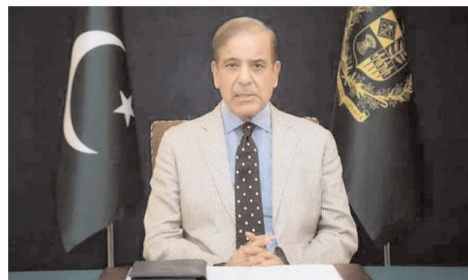


NEW YORK: Zohran Mamdani, a 34-year-old Democratic socialist, won the New York City mayoral race on Tuesday, capping a meteoric rise from a little-known state lawmaker to one of the country's most visible Democratic figures. According to CBS, Mamdani received 1,035,645 votes (50.4 per cent) against 854,783 (41.6pc) for former New York governor Andrew Cuomo and 146,127 (7.1pc) for Curtis Sliwa. Mamdani will become the first Muslim mayor of the largest US city. He defeated Democratic former Governor Andrew Cuomo, 67, who ran as an independent after losing the nomination to Mamdani in the primary election. The campaign served as an ideological and generational contest that could have national implications for the Democratic Party. Trump had made an eleventh-hour intervention in the race, calling Mamdani a "Jew hater". Mamdani was born in Uganda to a family of Indian origin and has lived in the United States since he was seven, becoming a naturalised US citizen in 2018. "Hope is alive," Mamdani declared in his victory speech. "We won because New Yorkers allowed themselves.

PM Shehbaz cancels ministers' visits amid efforts for consensus on 27th amendment

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has cancelled all official visits of ministers and members of parliament in light of the proposed 27th Constitutional Amendment. According to sources, the prime minister has directed all ministers and lawmakers to remain in Islamabad. He has also assigned National Assembly speaker, Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, a key task of building consensus among all political parties on the amendment. Sources further revealed that the Speaker has convened a meeting of all parliamentary leaders today (Wednesday) at 4 p.m. in the Speaker's Lounge. Parliamentary leaders from major parties, including Pakistan



Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (F), along with chief whips of allied parties, have been invited to attend. During the meeting, a briefing on the features of the constitutional amendment will be given, and the government's strategy for its approval will be final-

ized. Speaker Ayaz Sadiq is expected to urge all political parties to support the amendment and will also hold separate meetings with parliamentary leaders in his chamber. Sources added that if consensus is not achieved, the government will rely on its numerical strength in the

National Assembly. The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) has instructed all its members and those of allied parties to reach Islamabad immediately. Parliamentary sources said the ruling coalition currently enjoys the support of 224 members in the National.

Dar receives briefing on regional developments, forthcoming international engagements

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: The Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar on Wednesday received a comprehensive briefing from the Foreign Secretary and concerned officers of Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) on regional developments and forthcoming international engagements.

The DPM/FM directed that Pakistan's diplomacy be guided by clarity of purpose, strategic foresight, and proactive engagement.

PIA engineers protest causes nationwide flight disruptions

PEAK POINT

LAHORE: The Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) aircraft engineers' protest over unpaid salary increments and administrative pressure entered its second day on Wednesday. Amid these protests, PIA's seven flights were canceled today, while 39 others across the country experienced delays. The strike, organised by the Aircraft Engineers' Association, comes amid growing dissatisfaction among engineers with the behavior of the national airline's CEO. The association's president stated that the engineers are frustrated with management's.

Consultations underway to amend Article 243: Khawaja Asif

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Defence Minister Khawaja Asif has said that discussions were ongoing to amend an article of the Constitution, which addresses the control and command of the armed forces.

"Consultations on amending Article 243 are ongoing [...] defence requirements have changed," the minister told Geo News exclusively on Wednesday in Islamabad. The Constitution's Article 243 states that "The Federal Government shall have control and command of the Armed Forces" and "the Supreme Command of the Armed Forces shall vest in the President", among other things.

"This entire process will be carried out through



mutual consultation," said the defence minister, whose party, the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), attempts to amend the Constitution for the second time during its ongoing tenure.

Asif noted that consultations were ongoing with all political parties on the proposed amendment.

However, he declined to further comment on the potential tweak, saying that he "would not say anything until the amendment to Article 243 was finalised".

The minister expected clarity on the consensus within the next two or three days, with the 27th Amendment likely to be presented to parliament next

week.

His comments came after Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif reportedly directed National Assembly Speaker Ayaz Sadiq to build consensus among political parties for the proposed amendment. PML-N's efforts to amend the law came to light on November 3, when Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari confirmed that the ruling party had sought their support in introducing the amendment.

Bilawal said that the proposed amendment, in addition to amending Article 243, included the establishment of a Constitutional Court and certain changes to the National Finance Commission Award.

ECP summons key officials for Nov 13 Islamabad LG polls hearing

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has fixed November 13, for a hearing on Islamabad's local government elections, summoning senior officials to deliberate on proposed amendments in consultation with Interior Ministry and Islamabad Administration under Section 219(3) of the Elections Act. The meeting, chaired by Chief Election Commissioner Sikandar Sultan Raja, issued notices to the Secretary Interior and the Chief Commissioner, directing them to appear at upcoming hearing on Islamabad's local government elections.

The Election Commission was briefed during the meeting that an amendment is required in Section 15 of the Islamabad Local Government Act, 2015 (as amended in 2024). Officials noted that the Commission has written to the Ministry of Interior, urging the necessary changes to ensure smooth implementation of the law. The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP).





SPORTS



FIFA backs Pakistan's youth sports push: Sheikh Salman arrives on PMYP Invitation



PEAK POINT
ISLAMABAD: FIFA Senior Vice President Sheikh Salman bin Ibrahim Al Khalifa arrived in Islamabad on Wednesday on the invitation of Chairman Prime Minister's Youth Programme (PMYP) Rana Mashhood Ahmad Khan to review collaboration in sports development and youth participation across Pakistan.

He was welcomed at Islamabad International Airport by Syeda Anma Batool, Member National Assembly and Focal Person to the Prime Minister's Youth Programme.

The reception highlighted the

importance, the government is placing on this engagement and the role it sees for international partners in supporting young talent. During his visit, discussions will be held on developing football training systems, skill development programmes, and improved access to sports for young people.

The talks will include proposals for enhancing training for referees, coaches, and student athletes so that they can progress academically as well as professionally in the sports sector.

Officials from PMYP said the government is making efforts to create a system where sports can

lead to education, employment, and national representation.

They noted that an increasing number of students are showing interest in sports-related studies and look forward to practical training opportunities. Rana Mashhood Ahmad Khan said Pakistan has a strong base of youth who actively participate in various sports but often lack the facilities and coaching needed to reach competitive standards.

He said better coordination with international organizations like FIFA could help improve the quality of football learning and training facilities in educational

institutions and at the community level. Rana Mashhood explained that PMYP is working to ensure equal access to sports for students from different regions, especially areas where resources are limited.

Rana added that the development of sports can support confidence building and teamwork among young people, while also promoting good health and a more active lifestyle.

Pakistan has one of the largest youth populations in the region, and authorities emphasize that expanding opportunities in sports is an important part of national development.

Babar, Shaheen fall in latest ICC ODI rankings



PEAK POINT
ISLAMABAD: Star batter Babar Azam and newly made one-day international (ODI) captain Shaheen Afridi have slipped in the latest ICC rankings of the 50-over format, while several other national players have recorded impressive gains.

Babar fell to the fifth position from fourth, holding 728 rating points in the batters' rankings. In contrast, wicketkeeper-batter Mohammad Rizwan and opener Fakhar Zaman each gained a spot, now positioned at 23rd and 26th, respectively.

Middle-order batsman Salman Ali Agha jumped nine places to 30th with 569 points after his pivotal performance against South Africa in the series opener.

Left-handed opener Imam-ul-Haq slipped one spot to 42nd, whereas young opener Saim Ayub retained his position at 53rd with 509 points.

India's Rohit Sharma has retained his position as the top-ranked ODI batter, with Afghanistan's Ibrahim Zadran holding on to second place. New Zealand's Daryl Mitchell moved up two spots to third, pushing India's Shubman Gill down to fourth.

New office-bearers elected in Pakistan Pickleball federation general council meeting



SPORTS REPORTER
KARACHI: The Pakistan Pickleball Federation (PPF) held its General Council Meeting and Pickleball Seminar at Hotel Mehran in Karachi, where new office-bearers were elected and key initiatives for the promotion of the sport across the country were discussed. The meeting was attended by the Patron of the Sindh

Olympic Association, (CEO) and Faisal Sheikh Shakeel Ilyas, Zafar as Secretary General. Other newly appointed officials include Sarfaraz Ahmed Khan (Senior Vice President), Kabeer Ahmed and Syeda Ghaziyah Qazi (Vice Presidents), Shariq Siddiqui (Assistant Secretary), Azmat Pasha (Finance Secretary), Nimra 22 to 24, while participation in upcoming tournaments in the United States, Malaysia.

Zahid Ghaffar (Media Coordinator), and Executive Committee members Zareen Imtiaz, Umm-e-Laila, and Ghayasuddin Ansari. The newly elected leadership emphasized the importance of consistent efforts for the growth of pickleball in Pakistan, particularly at the grassroots level. They also announced plans to formulate a comprehensive national strategy to promote the sport and prepare players for international participation. It was further revealed that the Pakistan team will compete in an international pickleball event scheduled to be held in Japan from December 22 to 24, while participation in upcoming tournaments in the United States, Malaysia.

South African team holds training session ahead of second ODI



Pakistan to host ATP Challenger event for first time: Aisam

PEAK POINT
ISLAMABAD: Staging the ATP Challenger Cup for the first time in Pakistan will attract foreign players besides raising the country as an important destination for the professional sport, Pakistan Tennis Federation (PTF) president Aisam-ul-Haq said on Tuesday.

Addressing a press conference, Aisam said that Pakistan will be hosting an ATP event from Nov 24 to 30 which he termed a milestone.

"Top international players will be seen in action at the ATP challenger event carrying a prize money of \$50,000," the PTF president said.

He said that hosting an ATP event was a dream come true for Pakistan.

"It's a huge step forward for our players, fans and the entire sporting community. We are committed to providing world-class facilities and opportunities for our athletes," he said and added the PTF will host this event in a befitting manner.

"Pakistan is growing as an important destination for international players. Next year we are planning to hold a mega ITF tournament," he said while revealing that the federation was also planning to hold a tennis league next performance in international events.

"Their victories are a testament to the growing talent pool in Pakistan."

The PTF president announced plans to develop a covered court project at the



year. Aisam said that the PTF hosted a number of international events this year in Pakistan, while 12 teams were sent abroad for different competitions.

He also appreciated talented junior players, including Mikael Ali Baig and Shayan Afridi, for giving outstanding PTF Tennis Complex to ensure round-the-year training opportunities for players regardless of weather conditions.

Meanwhile, Aisam made a visit to the Pakistan Sweet Home in Sector H-9, Islamabad along with some players and PTF officials.

Amin Mukatay set sights on athletics glory



Amin Mukatay, a rising star in Pakistani athletics, is set to compete in international events. He is shown in action during a race and proudly holding the Pakistani flag, symbolizing his commitment to representing his country on the global stage.



Pakistan and Iran Vow Stronger Parliamentary Alliance as Speakers Condemn Israeli Aggression and Pledge Regional Unity

PEAK POINT
ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and Iran have reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening parliamentary, diplomatic, and strategic cooperation, as Speaker of the National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq met with Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf at the Parliament House in Islamabad. Both sides vowed to advance their historic relationship based on shared faith, culture, and regional stability, while strongly condemning Israeli aggression in the region. During the

high-level meeting, Speaker Ayaz Sadiq congratulated the Iranian government and people for what he described as a successful defense against Israel's attack, noting that the Parliament of Pakistan was the first in the world to unanimously denounce the Israeli strike on Iran. He lauded the Iranian Parliament's gesture of chanting "Pakistan Zindabad", calling it a reflection of the deep trust and affection between the two nations. He emphasized that Pakistan stands shoulder to shoulder with Iran, both in peace and in crisis, and high-



lighted that enhanced parliamentary cooperation would pave the way for new opportunities in trade, connectivity, and regional peace. "Iran is a trusted brotherly neighbor," he said, adding that mutual collaboration through parliamentary channels can help solidify unity across the Muslim world and counter regional instability. Iranian Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf expressed profound gratitude for Pakistan's unwavering diplomatic and moral support during Israel's aggression, describing Pakistan as a "true friend in need." He said Pakistan's prompt and principled position demonstrat-

ed the depth of bilateral friendship and regional solidarity. Qalibaf reaffirmed that Iran highly values its relationship with Pakistan and is keen to deepen cooperation in economic, cultural, and defense sectors. He further emphasized that parliamentary diplomacy is the backbone of regional harmony, noting that frequent exchanges between lawmakers can accelerate mutual understanding and coordinated policy efforts. "The people of Iran consider Pakistan a trusted partner in peace and development," he added. Both

Speakers agreed to intensify joint parliamentary efforts for regional peace, stability, and economic progress, with a shared commitment to counter external aggression and foster Muslim unity. The Iranian Speaker also praised Pakistan's constructive and balanced diplomatic role in promoting regional harmony. The meeting was also attended by Member National Assembly and Convener of the Pakistan-Iran Parliamentary Friendship Group, Syed Naveed Qamar, along with senior parliamentary officials from both sides.

Over 3,000 CDA repair requests unresolved as funding crisis deepens

NADEEM TANOLI
ISLAMABAD: Lawmakers in the National Assembly expressed concern over the Capital Development Authority's (CDA) growing administrative paralysis, with 3,108 pending applications for government house repairs, "non-availability of funds" blocking key development projects, and widespread complaints over waste mismanagement and encroachments across Islamabad. Responding to questions during the session, the Minister for Interior admitted that maintenance and repair work for government houses had stalled completely over the past five years due to a severe shortage of funds. He confirmed that the CDA Finance Department, which manages repair requests, has

been unable to clear thousands of applications, leaving many government residences in deteriorating condition. In another revelation, the Minister said that major development projects across Islamabad were also facing delays due to "less funding." He maintained that while the CDA uses engineering labs and consultants to ensure quality work, progress has slowed considerably. Lawmakers also criticized the solid waste disposal system, calling it "unprofessional." The Minister explained that CDA currently relies on the Rawalpindi Waste Management Company (RWMC) to dump Islamabad's waste at a site in Rawalpindi. However, the CDA is now moving to out-

source the entire solid waste management service and develop a new sanitary landfill site at Losar, to bring the system in line with international standards. The session further revealed several cases of illegal construction, poor civic planning, and misuse of plots in prime areas of the capital. In response to Jam Abdul Karim Bijar's question, the Minister confirmed that Plot No. 26 in F-6 Markaz, which was being used for commercial purposes in violation of CDA rules, had been sealed and is now under legal proceedings for allotment cancellation. In Sector 14, the CDA's anti-encroachment drive led to the removal of 35 unauthorized shops and 74 illegal structures, the restoration of street lights, and the preparation of cost esti-

mates for road rehabilitation. Meanwhile, concerns over Bahria Enclave's construction activities were addressed after MNA Asiya Naz Tanoli questioned the legality of housing approvals. The Minister confirmed that Bahria Enclave's No Objection Certificate (NOC) issued on April 8, 2022, required CDA approval for all construction plans and that no unauthorized building took place between April 2022 and May 2024. Lawmakers also took up issues of water scarcity and environmental degradation. The CDA plans to construct 20 new water tanks and 100 recharge wells within six months and two months respectively, to address the falling groundwater levels. The Minister also announced a

Free Public Wi-Fi Project in collaboration with the National Telecommunication Corporation (NTC), with service expected to begin by December 2025 at 30 key locations. Public safety concerns were also discussed when Ms. Erum Hamid raised the issue of a removed traffic signal at Shahzad Town's entrance. The Minister assured that the CDA had prioritized the construction of six new pedestrian bridges, including one at Shahzad Town, to reduce accidents and improve safety. On administrative and staffing issues, the Minister clarified that janitorial services at facilities such as the Parliament Lodges and Jinnah Convention Centre are outsourced, and contractors are legally bound to pay minimum

wages. Responding to MNA Syed Raffullah, he said all wages are being paid as per contract terms. Addressing concerns over provincial representation, particularly from Balochistan, the Minister confirmed that the 6% provincial quota is strictly followed during initial recruitment but does not extend to internal postings or transfers, which explains the uneven representation at certain CDA facilities. The session concluded with lawmakers urging the Interior Ministry to address Islamabad's worsening infrastructure, housing maintenance backlog, and sanitation crisis, warning that continued inaction could lead to further urban decay and administrative gridlock.

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Beyond Grades: Raising emotionally strong and spiritually grounded children

By Sarwat Batool
When the world is earnestly in the scarcity of hope. The obsession with results and perfection has been damaging lives, it's time we shift our focus from marks and appearances to emotional strength, gratitude, and spiritual growth. Recently, two young girls tragically ended their lives due to academic pressure. This heart-breaking reality exposes how our education system and society often measure worth through grades rather than growth, valuing results over well-being. Instead of nurturing emotionally stable and spiritually grounded individuals, we are creating a generation burdened by stress and unrealistic expectations. Today's children face multiple layers of pressure, to excel academically, to look perfect, and to present flawless versions of themselves on social media. Constant comparison makes them believe their value depends on perfect grades, curated success, and picture perfect appearances. Behind those smiles often lie silent struggles, loneliness, and deep self-doubt. As a society, we have placed excessive focus on appearances, possessions, and performance while neglecting what truly matters within. Children are not just bodies to be trained; they are minds and souls to be nurtured. When we limit our attention to their physical and academic growth, we unknowingly starve their emotional and spiritual selves, leaving them feeling disconnected and unseen. Many parents hear their children but rarely listen to them. Quick judgments, constant comparisons, and harsh words make



children feel unheard, unloved, and unworthy. Comparisons crush individuality, while criticism communicates rejection. "I don't accept you as you are." True listening requires patience, empathy, and presence. It helps children feel valued, strengthens trust, and builds lasting emotional connections between parents and children. Parents and educators often celebrate achievements but overlook effort, progress, and perseverance. Teaching children to appreciate their own efforts, to practice gratitude, and to find joy in growth rather than results helps develop resilience, contentment, and a healthy sense of self-worth. As Steve Jobs wisely said: "Teach your children to be happy, not rich, so they understand the value of things, not their price." As parents, we often repeat the patterns inherited from our parents and grandparents. Yet every era brings new realities and challenges, and parenting must evolve accordingly. While circumstances change, moral and human values remain timeless, the foundation on which every generation must stand. We, as parents, must first be emotionally balanced to raise emotionally balanced children. Teachers, too, play the role of spiritual parents, builders of nations, yet many have become confined to subject teaching alone. True education lies in recognizing each child's uniqueness, nurturing their ethics, and helping them discover purpose and meaning. Let us teach our children to be content

and grateful, to count their blessings instead of their shortcomings, to seek fulfillment rather than perfection. Beyond Success: Building Inner Strength Our children don't need perfection, they need connection. They don't need to be compared, they need to be understood. When children are emotionally secure, they naturally perform better, manage stress effectively, and build stronger relationships. Emotional well-being is a life skill that determines how they face challenges, handle failure, and stay grounded amid life's storms. Parents often push their children to meet society's standards of success, forgetting that every child blooms in their own time. We must redefine success, not as winning or competing, but as becoming the best version of oneself, living with integrity, compassion, and gratitude. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said: "The best of you are those who are best to their families." (Tirmidhi) This beautiful Hadith reminds us that emotional care, patience, and kindness within families are far more valuable than worldly accomplishments. It is the responsibility of both parents and teachers to create an environment where children feel safe to express themselves without fear of judgment. A crying child does not need scolding; they need understanding. A failing child does not need shame; they need guidance. Let us replace "Why did you fail?" with "How can I help you improve?" and "Why can't you be like others?" with "What makes you unique?" Small changes in language can make a huge difference in how children perceive themselves. Qur'anic Reflection > "Indeed, it is in the remembrance of Allah that hearts find rest." (Surah Ar-Ra'd, 13:28) When we help children connect with Allah through prayer, gratitude, and reflection, we give them the strongest foundation for emotional strength and inner peace. A spiritually connected child learns to turn to Allah in moments of fear, failure, or doubt, finding hope instead of despair. Emotional resilience is not about avoiding pain, it's about learning to grow through it. Our goal should not be to raise children who never fail, but those who rise every time they do, with faith, courage, and gratitude. It is time for parents, teachers, and society at large to rethink success. Let us prioritize mental and emotional well-being alongside academic excellence. Let our schools promote mindfulness, gratitude, and empathy, not just competition. Let our homes be filled with love, laughter, and open communication rather than pressure and perfectionism. When we raise children who value kindness, patience, and self-belief, we raise future leaders who will heal societies rather than harm them. Every child deserves to be seen, heard, and valued, not for what they achieve, but for who they are. Let's remind ourselves, education without empathy is incomplete, and success without peace is meaningless. The true mark of an educated generation will not be in grades, but in grace; in how they treat others, handle pain, and stay kind even in a cruel world. May we, as parents and teachers, become role models of emotional balance and spiritual depth, guiding our children toward lives filled with purpose, faith, and inner peace.

Knives out

THE 18th Amendment has been a thorn in the side of certain quarters within the state, especially those that desire greater control over its meagre resources. Now, with clear signals that a 27th amendment is being pushed forward, it seems the 18th Amendment may finally end up on the chopping block. PPP chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari, revealing that the prime minister has sought his party's support for the amendment, has stated that the subjects of education and population planning have been sought to be returned to the federation. This would mean a significant rollback of the powers delegated to the provinces under the 18th Amendment. Not only that, the safeguards for provincial shares in state revenues under the National Finance Commission Award are also to be done away with. The judiciary is also in the crosshairs, with plans to set up constitutional courts, restore executive magistrates and more tightly control the transfer of judges. It is remarkable that the PPP has been approached for its consent. After all, the 18th Amendment was a major achievement for the party and its co-chairman, incumbent President Asif Ali Zardari. The president and his party are being expected to give up the crowning glory of their political contributions in recent memory. Seen in that context, Mr Bhutto-Zardari's surprise post on X may have simply been a call for attention.

Tarar vows to protect journalists & media workers' rights



PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar on Wednesday held a comprehensive meeting with a delegation of key journalistic bodies, including Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ), Rawalpindi-Islamabad Union of Journalists (RIUJ), and National Press Club (NPC), to address pressing issues,

facied by media fraternity.

The delegation included President of PFUJ Afzal Butt, Secretary of NPC, Nayyar Ali, Secretary of RIUJ Asif Bashir Chaudhry, and journalist leaders Mazhar Abbas and Shehzada Zulfqar.

The establishment of Journalists Protection Commission, illegal dismissals of journalists and media workers, and other issues came under

discussion.

The minister noted that process for establishing Journalists Protection Commission is currently in its final stages.

He assured them of the protection of journalists' rights. Tarar expressed deep concern that some media houses were still continuing to dismiss employees despite historic payments of their dues by the government.

He pledged that the matter would be formally taken up with media owners. The minister held out the assurance for making the existing health insurance system for journalists more effective and comprehensive. He reiterated that the government would continue to take practical steps for the freedom of the press and the economic security of media workers.

The minister also assured the delegation that the Charter of Demands related to the attack on the National Press Club would be implemented.

Acting President reaffirms commitment to strengthen football governance

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Acting President Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani on Wednesday reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to strengthen football governance and to ensure the effective functioning of the Pakistan Football Federation in line with Asian Football Confederation (AFC) and FIFA standards.

He was talking to a delegation of the AFC, led by its President, Senior Vice President of FIFA and a senior member of the Royal Family of Bahrain Shaikh Salman Ebrahim Hamid Al Khalifa, which called on him at President House.

The delegation included Datuk Seri Windsor Paul John, General Secretary of the AFC and Syed Mohsen Gilani, President of the Pakistan Football Federation (PFF).

The acting president emphasised the importance of expanding youth engagement,

noting that with youth forming the majority of Pakistan's population, it is vital to plan and promote sports activities. He added that upgrading football infrastructure and establishing youth academies across Pakistan were areas where support from the AFC would be invaluable.

He appreciated the AFC's continued support for the revival of football in Pakistan and underscored the need to revitalise domestic competitions and create greater opportunities for Pakistani players to compete at regional and international levels.

Mr Gilani thanked Shaikh Salman Ebrahim Hamid Al Khalifa and the AFC delegation for their sustained engagement and reaffirmed Pakistan's resolve to work closely with the AFC to promote football and strengthen people-to-people ties through sports.



ISLAMABAD: On behalf of Former National Football Player Shahid Khan Shinwari presented Shahid & Brother Tyre Company football President of the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) and Senior Vice President of FIFA, H.E. Shaikh Salman Ebrahim Hamid Al Khalifa, presenting a football to Acting President Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

Sheikh Rashid barred from travelling for Umrah despite LHC order

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Awami Muslim League (AML) chief Sheikh Rashid Ahmed was barred from travelling to Saudi Arabia for Umrah on Wednesday, despite directives from the Lahore High Court (LHC) allowing him to travel abroad. According to an October 30 court order — a copy of which is available with Dawn — the AML leader's name had been removed from the Exit Control List (ECL), following involvement in several May 9 cases. The court had directed relevant authorities to allow him to travel. However, in a video message posted on the social media platform X, Rashid alleged: "Today, I was stopped from going to Saudi Arabia for Umrah, despite having permission from LHC's Rawalpindi bench under Justice Sadaqat Ali Khan." The AML leader recalled that the "court had directed relevant authorities — who were present in the hearing — to comply and strictly adhere to the directives, yet I have been told that I can not go." Rashid alleged that two airport officers.

Pakistan marks major progress in digital and telecom sectors: Shaza

PEAK POINT



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for IT and Telecommunication Shaza Fatima Khawaja said on Wednesday that Pakistan's telecom and digital sectors had shown impressive growth in recent years, making the country one of Asia's fastest-emerging digital economies. Speaking at the 26th Meeting of the South Asian Telecommunication Regulators' Council (SATRC-26), she said Pakistan had achieved key milestones under its Digital Nation Pakistan agenda. "We now have over 200 million mobile subscribers and 150 million broadband users, showing one of the fastest data adoption rates in Asia," she said. The minister said that data usage in Pakistan had increased by 70% in the past five years, while telecom revenues grew 17% annual-

ly, contributing Rs. 1.5 trillion to the national exchequer. "These figures reflect the strength and resilience of our telecom sector," she added. Highlighting the expanding digital economy, she said e-commerce in Pakistan had reached \$7.7 billion and was expected to exceed \$10 billion next year. ICT exports are also rising by nearly 20% each year. She said Pakistan had made notable progress toward digital governance, with 98% of federal government offices now using e-office systems, making governance largely paperless.

President Islamabad Chamber met with President Islamabad Guest House Association Sardar Azhar Azad

PEAK POINT



ISLAMABAD: President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry Sardar Tahir Mahmood met with President Islamabad Guest House Association Sardar Azhar Azad, Senior Vice President Muhammad Zahoor Awan and General Secretary Syed Khuram Gilani. The issues facing the Islamabad Guest House Association, the current situation of the industry and the future course of action were discussed in detail in the meeting. On this occasion, both parties agreed that the guest house industry in

Islamabad is playing an important role in the promotion of tourism and economy, which should be provided with full support at the policy level. President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry Sardar Tahir Mahmood assured that the chamber will contact the relevant institutions to resolve the issues of the guest house industry and provide facilities.

Campaign to eradicate polio in Bannu district appears to be failing severely

OUR CORRESPONDENT

BANNU: The campaign to eradicate polio in Bannu district appears to be failing severely, where health workers are merely marking houses instead of administering life-saving polio drops to children. This grave negligence has not only left the innocent children of the district vulnerable to the deadly poliovirus but has also raised serious questions about the waste of billions of rupees in funds allocated by the World Bank. According to local sources, the performance of the polio program has been reduced to mere social media posts and newspaper headlines, while the actual vaccination work on the ground is nearly non-existent. The public believes that the billions of rupees in funds released by the World Bank for polio eradication are

being squandered, instead of being used effectively. Observers state that several officials, including the District Health Officer (DHO) and the district administration, have been found complicit in this failure. There is intense public anger over this situation, prompting local circles to demand direct intervention from the World Bank, the Prime Minister of Pakistan, the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and the Provincial Health Minister. The demand emphasizes that immediate and strict disciplinary action must be taken against all officials involved in this negligence. The public pleads for mercy for their innocent children, urging that real polio drops be administered instead of just putting up fake marks, so that district Bannu can be permanently freed from this vicious disease.

Google eyes Pakistan as emerging export hub, says FinMin Aurangzeb

PEAK POINT

KARACHI: Federal Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb has said that Google plans to make Pakistan an export hub.

Addressing the Future Summit in Karachi, the finance minister said that Pakistan's economy was moving in the right direction.

He emphasised the crucial role of the private sector, stating that production-driven growth is the only sustainable path. The minister added that Pakistan aims to become an export hub, with a strong

focus on the IT and maritime sectors. Highlighting the government's reform agenda, Aurangzeb said the federal cabinet is undergoing a "right-sizing" process, with 39 ministries being merged and 24 state-owned entities slated for privatization.

According to Aurangzeb, 70 percent of the ministry mergers and closure of unnecessary departments have already been completed, and employees are being provided packages aligned with private-sector standards.

FinMin confirmed that the privatization of Pakistan



International Airlines (PIA) will be completed before the end of the year, alongside ongoing efforts to privatize three distribution companies. The first women's bank has

already been successfully privatized, attracting multi-million-dollar investment.

Aurangzeb emphasized the crucial role of the private sector in driving economic growth. "Sustainable, production-based growth is the only path forward. Pakistan's economy is on the right track, and our macroeconomic stability has been recognized globally," he said. He added that structural reforms and digitization are essential for transparency and long-term economic resilience.

The Finance Minister also highlighted Pakistan's poten-

tial in the IT and maritime sectors, noting that the country ranks as the third-largest provider of freelancers worldwide. Plans are underway to make Pakistan an export hub.

with global companies showing strong interest in investment.

Addressing fiscal reforms, Aurangzeb mentioned that corporate profits have increased by 9%, while the number of taxpayers has grown by 900,000, with Egypt reportedly seeking guidance on Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) reforms.