



**FIFA, AFC delegation calls on Defence Minister**  
Khawaja Muhammad Asif



**Gilani calls for stronger Pakistan-Iran parliamentary, economic cooperation**



**Minister calls for regional cooperation to confront growing water challenges**

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## PM Shehbaz holds consultations with allies on 27th Amendment

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: The Muttahida Qaumi Movement Pakistan (MQM-P) has urged Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to empower local governments under the proposed 27th constitutional amendment, as promised earlier. A seven-member MQM-P delegation, led by convener Dr Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui, met with Prime Minister Sharif at the Prime Minister's House to discuss the matter.

The delegation included Sindh Governor Kamran Khan Tessori, Federal Health Minister Syed Mustafa Kamal, and National Assembly members Dr. Farooq Sattar, Javed Hanif Khan, Syed Aminul Haq, and Khawaja Izzahul Hassan.

According to sources, the MQM-P leaders

requested that their local government draft be incorporated into the 27th amendment, aiming to devolve more powers to municipal administrations. The Prime Minister reportedly assured the delegation that their proposals would be considered and integrated into the amendment. MQM-P sources indicated that securing the support of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) for their local government draft was a top priority during the meeting. They said the PML-N had pledged full support for the MQM-P proposals within the constitutional amendment. Following the meeting, Sindh Governor Kamran Tessori stated that Prime Minister Sharif had fully consulted MQM-P leaders regarding the draft.



ISLAMABAD: A delegation of MQM-P led by Convener Dr Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

## CJCSC meets Sultan, top civil, military leaderships of Brunei Darussalam

PEAK POINT



RAWALPINDI: Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (CJCS) General Sahir Shamsah Mirza, NI, NI (M) who is on an official visit to Brunei Darussalam, had an

audience with Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkhah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah Ibbi Al-Marhum Sultan Haji Omar 'Ali Saifuddin Sa'adul Khairi Waddien, Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam.

The CJCSC also held separate meetings with Yang Berhormat Pehin Datu Lailaraja Major General (Retired) Dato Paduka Seri Awang Haji Halbi bin Haji Mohd Yusoff, Minister at PM's office and Minister of Defence-II and Major General Dato Paduka Seri Haji Muhammad Haszaimi bin Bol Hassan, Commander of the Royal Brunei Armed Forces, said a news release issued by Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) here Thursday.

In addition, CJCSC also visited KDB DARULAMAN at Muara Naval Base and Defence Academy Royal Brunei Armed Forces, where he delivered a talk on "Pakistan's contributions to regional peace and stability" and interacted with the students of Command.

## British army chief meets COAS Munir; both discuss enhancing bilateral defence cooperation

PEAK POINT

RAWALPINDI: The British Army's Chief of the General Staff (CGS) Gen Sir Charles Roland Vincent Walker on Thursday met Chief of Army Staff (COAS) Field Marshal Asim Munir in Rawalpindi, where the two discussed

boosting bilateral defence cooperation. The meeting between the army chiefs took place at the General Headquarters (GHQ), a press release from the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said.

"During the meeting, matters of mutual interest, regional security and measures to further enhance bilateral defence cooperation were discussed," it said.

"Both sides reiterated the need for contin-



ued collaboration to ensure peace and stability in the region," the military's media affairs wing added.

Gen Walker "appreciated Pakistan Army's achievements and sacrifices in the fight against terrorism and its efforts for regional peace and stability," according to the ISPR.

Upon his arrival at the GHQ, the British

CGS laid a floral wreath at Yadgar-i-Shuhada to

Defence and Defence Production Gen Abdul Maged Saqar. COAS Munir had last met with Gen Walker during his five-day official visit to the United Kingdom in February, where he attended and delivered a keynote address at the annual 7th Regional Stabilisation Conference at the Royal Military Academy in Sandhurst.

During his visit, the army chief had also engaged with the UK's then-chief of defence staff Admiral Toney Radikin and National Security Adviser Jonathan Nicholas Powell, and Home Secretary Yvette Cooper to discuss shared security challenges and the importance of enhanced collaboration between the two nations.

The field marshal's meeting today comes about two weeks after his visit to Egypt, where he held discussions with the Egyptian Armed Forces' Chief of Staff Lt Gen Ahmed Khalifa Fatehi and Minister of

## Pakistan rejects allegations of denial of entry to Hindu community

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Thursday categorically rejected the unfounded and misleading allegations that members of the Hindu community were denied entry into its territory. The Foreign Office Spokesperson Tahir Hussain Andrabi in a statement said, "These claims are entirely baseless and represent yet another attempt to distort facts and politicize a matter that was purely administrative in nature." He was responding to media queries regarding allegations.

## Marriage no bar to daughters' employment: SC upholds equality

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court of Pakistan has ruled that marriage cannot deprive a daughter of her right to employment under her parents' government service quota. The Court held that a married daughter enjoys the same entitlement as a married son, and any denial of such employment is unconstitutional, unlawful, and contrary to the principles of gender equality. The landmark judgment, authored by Justice Syed Mansoor Ali Shah, was released on the Supreme Court's official website in the case.

Since the skirmishes between October 11 and 15, Pakistan and Afghan Taliban representatives have held two rounds of talks — first in Doha and then in Istanbul — but a final agreement has not yet been achieved.

## Third round of talks between Pakistan and Afghanistan in presence of mediators begins in Istanbul

PEAK POINT

ISTANBUL: Pakistan resumed talks with Afghan Taliban representatives in Istanbul today in a third round of engagement aimed at ending cross-border terrorism and consolidating a fragile ceasefire that was initially agreed upon after border clashes last month.

Since the skirmishes between October 11 and 15, Pakistan and Afghan Taliban representatives have held two rounds of talks — first in Doha and then in Istanbul — but a final agreement has not yet been achieved.

For the third round, under the joint mediation of Turkiye and Qatar, delegations from both sides arrived in Istanbul on Wednesday. The talks are expected to continue for two days. In this round,

Pakistan's delegation is being led by Lt Gen Asim Malik, director general of

Minister Rehmatullah Najib, Taliban spokesperson



the Inter-Services Intelligence, and includes senior officials from the military, intelligence agencies, and the Foreign Office. The Afghan Taliban's delegation, meanwhile, includes General Directorate of Intelligence (GDI) chief Abdul Haq Waseq, Deputy Interior

Suhail Shaheen, Anas Haqqani, Qahar Balkhi, Zakir Jalali and Afghanistan's chargé d'affaires in Ankara.

A joint statement was released by the Turkish foreign ministry following the last round of talks between the two sides. It said that "all parties have agreed on

continuation of ceasefire" and "to put in place a monitoring and verification mechanism that will ensure maintenance of peace and impose a penalty on the violating party".

The communique further stated that "the principals" from both sides would reconvene in Istanbul on November 6 to discuss implementation.

Earlier, a diplomat from one of the mediating countries said while speaking to Dawn on the condition of anonymity that the two sides will review the implementation of the commitments reached during the previous round of talks and to finalise the modalities for the monitoring and verification mechanism agreed in principle last week. Meanwhile, officials in both Islamabad and Kabul have kept expectations low.

## Federal govt accepts PTI's invitation to KP peace jirga



PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Frontier Affairs Amir Muqam announced on Thursday that the federal government would take part in the upcoming peace jirga called by the PTI. The announcement was made as Muqam held a joint press conference alongside PTI stalwart Asad Qaiser in Islamabad. Earlier this week, the PTI decided to convene a peace jirga in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly (KPA) on November 12 to discuss the volatile law and order situation in the province. "We have conveyed our requests to the federal government and are grateful that they accepted our invitation," Qaiser said while jointly addressing reporters after the meeting. "We have come together and we know what policy.



# SPORTS



## South Africa defeat Pakistan in 2nd ODI to level series



**PEAK POINT**  
**FAISALABAD:** Quinton de Kock's unbeaten century and Tony de Zorzi's solid half-century powered South Africa to a commanding eight-wicket win over Pakistan in the second ODI at Iqbal Stadium, Faisalabad, on Thursday.

The thumping victory helped South Africa level the series against Pakistan at 1-1, with the third and final ODI set to be played at the same venue on Saturday.

The touring side made the light work of the 270-run target set by

Pakistan as they achieved the total for the loss of just two wickets and 59 balls to spare.

South Africa got off to a flamboyant start to the pursuit, courtesy of a brisk 81-run stand between openers Lhuan-dre Pretorius and de Kock.

Returning Mohammad Wasim Jr provided the home side with a much-needed breakthrough in the 12th over by getting Pretorius caught behind. The opener made a 40-ball 46 with the help of seven fours and a six.

Following his dismissal, Tony de Zorzi joined de Kock in the

middle, and the duo strengthened South Africa's position by putting together 153 runs for the second wicket.

The match-defining partnership culminated in the 35th over when Faheem Ashraf got de Zorzi caught at point. He walked back after scoring a brisk 76 off just 63 deliveries, smashing nine fours and three sixes.

Quinton de Kock, on the other hand, carried his bat all the way through and top-scored with an unbeaten 123 off 119 deliveries, studded with eight fours and seven sixes. He received notable support

from captain Matthew Breetzke, who made 16 not out from 20 balls.

For Pakistan, Wasim Jr and Faheem could pick up a wicket apiece.

Opting to bat first, the home team finished at 269/9 in the allotted 50 overs, courtesy of a late onslaught.

The Green Shirts, however, got off to a dismal start to their innings as left-arm pacer Nandre Burger ran through their top-order, dismissing Fakhar Zaman (zero), Babar Azam (11) and Mohammad Rizwan (four) cheaply.

## Nauman Ali nominated for ICC player of the month award for October



**PEAK POINT**

**LAHORE:** Pakistan's left-arm spinner Nauman Ali has been nominated for the ICC Men's Player of the Month Award for October, following his outstanding performance in the Lahore Test against South Africa.

The International Cricket Council (ICC) released the list of nominees on Thursday, featuring three spinners in contention for the men's award — Pakistan's Nauman Ali, South Africa's Senuran Muthusamy, and Afghanistan's Rashid Khan.

Nauman earned his nomination after a memorable display in the Lahore Test, where he claimed 10 wickets in the match, playing a pivotal role in Pakistan's victory.

His consistent bowling performances have also placed him among the top two bowlers in the ICC Test rankings.

South Africa's Muthusamy was recognised for his all-round showing against Pakistan, where he picked up 11 wickets and scored 89 runs during the series.

Meanwhile, Afghanistan's Rashid Khan impressed with his match-winning bowling against Bangladesh, securing his place among the nominees.

In the women's category, India's Smriti Mandhana, Australia's Ash Gardner, and South Africa's Laura Wolvaardt have been shortlisted.

## Game On: FIFA and Pakistan's Youth team up for a Football Future



**PEAK POINT**

**ISLAMABAD:** FIFA Senior Vice President Sheikh Salman bin Ibrahim Al Khalifa met Chairman of the Prime Minister's Youth Programme Rana Mashhood Ahmad Khan at the Prime Minister's Office in

Islamabad on Thursday. The meeting focused on how Pakistan, FIFA, and the Pakistan Football Federation can jointly revive football, build modern infrastructure, and support youth development nationwide.

Game On: FIFA

son for PMYP.

Game On: FIFA and Pakistan's Youth Team Up for a Football Future

Rana Mashhood warmly welcomed Sheikh Salman's visit and expressed gratitude for his support at this crucial stage of Pakistan's sports recovery. He reaffirmed that the Government of Pakistan, led by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, is determined to work with FIFA and its regional bodies to restore Pakistan's global standing in football. He said the government aims to transform football into a strong driver of youth empowerment.



**ISLAMABAD:** Secretary Workers Welfare Fund Zulfikar Ahmad joins students holding torches to kick off the opening ceremony of Katiyaat School System's Annual Sports Gala 2025 at Sector I-10.

## Amid lifetime ban and legal fiasco, Arshad Nadeem's coach to travel with him for Islamic Solidarity Games

**PEAK POINT**

**ISLAMABAD:** Arshad Nadeem's coach Salman Butt will travel with him for the upcoming Islamic Solidarity Games next week despite having been slapped with a lifetime ban by the Athletics Federation of Pakistan (AFP) which prohibits him from participating in any athletics activities.

The ban, which the federation imposed on Salman on October 12 "for gross violations of the AFP Constitution", barred Salman from participating in any athletics activity "whether as an athlete, coach, official, or office bearer, at both national and international levels, inside or outside Pakistan."

AFP cited "illegal and unconstitutional" elections held on August 31 by the Punjab Athletics Association — of which Salman was president till August 6 — as

the primary reason for the ban.

The ban came just days after AFP asked Salman to explain Arshad's 10th-place finish at the World Athletics Championships in Tokyo in September.

of which Dawn has seen, Rashid sent a questionnaire to AFP and held the first hearing on November 3, but the federation objected to the matter being sent to an adjudicator instead of arbitration. PSB, citing its constitu-



The matter descended into the legal sphere when Salman approached the Pakistan Sports Board (PSB) on Oct 14 to hear the case that he was appealing. PSB appointed Senator Pervaiz Rashid as adjudicator to the case. According to a notice of hearing on the matter, a copy

tion, as well as hearings from both the Supreme Court and Islamabad High Court, said it "possesses ample jurisdiction and authority to hear and decide the present matter", and that the objection raised by AFP regarding jurisdiction was "rejected and set aside."

## AFC President and FIFA Vice President Sheikh Salman bin Ibrahim Al Khalifa witnesses Girls' Football Match at Islamabad College for Girls



**PEAK POINT**

**ISLAMABAD:** The President of the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) and Vice President of FIFA, Sheikh Salman bin Ibrahim Al Khalifa, today witnessed an exciting girls' football match at Islamabad College for Girls, F-6/2, Islamabad. The event

showcased the growing talent and enthusiasm of young female footballers in Pakistan. During his visit, Sheikh Salman bin Ibrahim Al Khalifa was impressed by the confidence and excitement of the young girls as they showcased their skills on the field. He interacted with the players, coaches, and school administrators, praising their dedication to the sport. "It's heartening to see the passion and talent of these young girls. Football has the power to empower and inspire, and I'm delighted to see it being played at the grassroots level in Pakistan," said Sheikh Salman bin Ibrahim Al Khalifa. The AFC President also visited the school, meeting with students and faculty members. He commended the school's efforts in promoting girls' education and sports, particularly football. Sheikh Salman bin Ibrahim Al Khalifa's visit highlights the AFC's commitment to developing football in Pakistan and promoting women's football in the region.



# (CASS) organised a roundtable discussion titled “Biological Risks, Global Conventions and Pakistan’s Options”

## PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: The Centre for Aerospace and Security Studies (CASS), Lahore organised a roundtable discussion titled “Biological Risks, Global Conventions and Pakistan’s Options”. As an independent think tank, CASS Lahore organises academic events for scholars and practitioners interested in national security in its wider context. The event was attended by academics, intellectuals, and domain experts. Ms Ezba Walyat Khan, a Research Assistant at CASS Lahore, delivered the opening address. Prof Dr Syed Javid Khurshid, Consultant for Science Communication and

Diplomacy, delivered a talk structured in two sessions. In the first session, “Understanding Current Biosafety and Biosecurity Conventions, Treaties, Agreements and Implementation Challenges”, he traced the evolution of the 1972 Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) and explained that the absence of a verification mechanism undermines confidence and leaves states vulnerable to non-compliance. He highlighted the dual-use dilemma of modern biotechnology, where scientific advances may be misused for biowarfare or bioterrorism. Citing COVID-19, he highlighted the difficulty in distinguish-

ing natural outbreaks from deliberate biological incidents. In the second session, “Emerging Global Challenges in the

development of education programmes and strengthening methods and capacities for detection of outbreaks of diseases at the

Furthermore, he commended Pakistan’s commitment to biosecurity through the BWC Act, Export Control Laws, and Biosafety Rules 2005. He concluded with several key recommendations, including the establishment of a vaccine bank, the local production of essential vaccines, and Pakistan’s inclusion in the Australia Group and the Wassenaar Arrangement. In his concluding remarks, Air Marshal Asim Suleman (Retd), President CASS Lahore, stated that today’s rapidly changing security landscape demands stronger global and national responses to biological threats. This is especially important in the backdrop of accidental release-

es, potential weaponisation of biology, and weak international oversight mechanisms. Nevertheless, he observed, Pakistan has met its BWC obligations through strong laws, biosafety institutions, and responsible scientific practice. However, Pakistan must strengthen resilience through ethical innovation and balanced diplomacy to promote equitable global preparedness for collective biological security. The seminar concluded with a lively interactive session. It highlighted Pakistan’s BWC engagement and biosafety challenges, urging the development of a stronger biotechnology and pharmaceutical capacity for national health security.



Implementation of the Biological Weapons Convention and Pakistan’s Policy Options”, Dr Khurshid urged nations to take confidence building measures national, regional, and international levels. He also brought the Russia-Ukraine conflict in the discussion as it renewed attention to biological weapons concern.

# CAA Clears Corruption Allegations, Confirms Strict Transparency and Zero-Tolerance Policy

## NADEEM TANOLI

ISLAMABAD: The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) has denied any proven cases of corruption within its ranks over the past three years, following two investigations into alleged irregularities in land allotments and commercial contracts. The Minister for Defence, Khawaja Muhammad Asif, told the National Assembly that no evidence of malpractice was found against any CAA officer or official, reaffirming the organiza-

tion’s commitment to transparency and compliance. The Minister revealed that during the last three years, only two complaints alleging corruption were reported, both linked to the Commercial and Estates Directorate of the Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority (PCAA). A Fact-Finding Committee (FFC) thoroughly investigated both cases but found no wrongdoing or misuse of authority, leading to a “Nil Report” being submitted. “The investigations did not establish any

instance of malpractice or financial irregularity,” the Minister said, adding that no officer or employee was found guilty or faced disciplinary action as a result. He assured the House that the CAA enforces clear and strict procedural controls to prevent corruption. Regular Government, Internal, and ISO-certified audits are carried out to monitor compliance and detect any anomalies in administrative or financial operations. The CAA also follows the Public Procurement Regulatory

Authority (PPRA) Rules and Planning Commission guidelines, ensuring all contracts, tenders, and land allocations are handled under transparent, competitive, and auditable mechanisms. Additionally, a Grievance Redressal Committee (GRC) functions within the organization to handle public and internal complaints promptly and fairly. The Minister emphasized that the Civil Aviation Authority maintains a zero-tolerance stance on corruption and mismanagement.

“The CAA remains fully committed to transparency and good governance, with institutional systems designed to prevent and penalize any irregular practices,” he stated. In a separate response, the Defence Minister clarified that PKR 24 billion provided to Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) was not a bailout, but rather Bridge Financing Facilities extended by the CAA to support the airline’s operations during severe financial constraints. He added that this

financing was crucial for maintaining flight operations and preventing service disruption during a period of acute liquidity shortage. The Minister said that such inter-agency support, while temporary, was structured and accountable, forming part of the PIA debt restructuring plan, under which PKR 17 billion was later transferred to PIA Holding Company Limited (PIAHL), with the remaining PKR 7 billion still payable by PIA.

# Opinion & Editorial


  
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## Bordering on connectivity

**HINA AYRA**  
For decades, Pakistan’s borders have symbolised more control than connectivity. Every truck stopped at a dusty checkpoint, every queue snaking across Torkham or Chaman, told a story of missed opportunities.

While our geography offered an enviable advantage, a bridge between South Asia, Central Asia and the Middle East, our border management reflected an outdated mindset of security-first and commerce-later. Today, parliament has finally provided the corrective instrument that could turn these choke points into economic gateways: the Pakistan Land Port Authority (PLPA). For the first time, the country has a single institutional home to manage, modernise and coordinate its land crossings end-to-end.

The newly passed PLPA Act represents one of the most consequential trade facilitation reforms in Pakistan’s recent history. It addresses a chronic problem: fragmented control. Until now, each border point was effectively a patchwork of multiple agencies: customs under the FBR, immigration under interior, transit trade under commerce and security forces under various commands operating with little synergy or accountability. This fragmentation inflated dwell time, discouraged traders and eroded Pakistan’s competitiveness as a transit and export corridor.

The new authority brings an operational alignment by promising “one owner, one playbook”. Its mandate includes managing all land ports, coordinating agencies, developing infrastructure and introducing measurable Service-Level Agreements (SLAs) to track performance and accountability. It’s a shift from passive control to active facilitation.

Historically, Pakistan’s border management has evolved in fits and starts, responding more to crises than to long-term strategy. The Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement (APTTA), signed in 2010, was meant to transform Pakistan into the primary conduit for Afghan imports and exports, but operational inefficiencies, smuggling leakages and political mistrust undermined its potential. At one time, over 80 per cent of Afghan transit trade flowed through Pakistani ports and land borders. Yet, by 2024, Afghanistan had shifted much of its cargo to Iranian routes via Bandar Abbas and Chabahar.

The numbers tell the story: in FY2022-23, Pakistan handled around 102,886 containers of Afghan transit cargo worth approximately \$6.7 billion, a 39 per cent rise from the previous year. But by mid-2025, that figure had collapsed. According to Pakistan’s official data and trade trackers, transit volumes dropped by 84 per cent in July-August 2024 alone and overall transit

trade plunged to around \$2.9 billion in early 2025 from over \$7 billion two years earlier.

This decline was not purely political; it was operational. Traders cited delays, unpredictable clearance times, multiple inspections and arbitrary closures as reasons for rerouting cargo through Iran. At its worst, it could take up to 72 hours for a single truck to clear Torkham, compared to less than 10 hours at comparable Indian or Iranian crossings. These inefficiencies cost Pakistan not only revenue but also reputation. Meanwhile, Bangladesh and India, both having established their own Land Port Authorities decades earlier (in 2002 and 2012, respectively), have demonstrated how unified management can drive predictability and trust. Pakistan’s delay in creating a similar authority meant it spent years watching regional competitors capture the transit and logistics markets it should have led.

The PLPA Act 2025 now offers Pakistan a reset. It consolidates border management under a single framework, enabling performance-based oversight and integration with the Pakistan Single Window (PSW). The idea is to embed a performance culture, measurable SLAs for clearance times, digital dashboards showing throughput and real-time data sharing with traders and agencies alike.

Courtesy The News

## NFC and the 27th amendment

### Khurram Husain

THE provincial governments are under pressure to free up resources from their share of transfers under the NFC award to help meet defence and debt servicing requirements of the federal government. Conversations with those in the provincial governments who are familiar with these developments suggest they are preparing to accommodate this pressure, but in a way that does not require amending the constitutional clause which guarantees that the provincial share in the NFC award will not be reduced.

It is hard to make a case for sharing the costs of debt servicing with the provinces. Unless the centre is willing to agree that it will only take on additional debt with the approval of the provincial governments, it cannot ask them to share in the cost of servicing this debt. But defence expenditure is different. The provinces can be told that since they are beneficiaries of the protection provided by the armed forces, some portion of the cost of maintaining this protection must be borne by them. The room to debate this matter is now limited since the centre has indicated that it must get assent on this question, otherwise it will modify the Constitution to extract the resources it needs regardless. The total amount being asked of the provinces is supposedly around Rs500 billion per annum. The provinces have to agree on two things. First, they have to agree on who will bear how much of the burden to free up this amount between them. Second they have to agree on a mechanism on how the free-up funds will be transferred. The next NFC meeting is scheduled tentatively for Nov 27. If the provinces come to this meeting with their assent to free up Rs500bn from their share of NFC transfers for defence-related expenditures of the federal government, and a viable mechanism through which to do this, the need to amend Article 160(3A) will not be necessary and that part of the 27th amendment which seeks to amend this clause may get dropped.

Courtesy Dawn

## Urban denial

FOR decades, policymakers have sustained the narrative that Pakistan is a predominantly rural country, with only 39pc of its population classified as urban. However, a new World Bank study upends this long-held belief. The study reveals a strikingly different reality: nearly 88pc of the population actually lives in areas with urban characteristics. Of this, 46pc people reside in high-density cities, while 42pc live in moderately dense urban centres. This finding indicates that secondary cities and peri-urban areas, rather than the megacities, have been the real engines of urban expansion. Yet they remain systematically overlooked in official classifications and policy frameworks. The discrepancy is far more than a statistical quirk; it exposes a deep-rooted planning and governance failure, marked by distorted policymaking, misallocated resources, and a fundamental misunderstanding of where and how most Pakistanis actually live. Since 1972, the task of defining what constitutes an ‘urban’ area in Pakistan has been left to provincial and municipal committees that operate without clear criteria. Factors such as population size, infrastructure development and access to public services are largely ignored. These committees are also under no formal obligation to take population density or settlement patterns into account when classifying an area as urban.

## FIFA, AFC delegation calls on Defence Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif



PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: A high-level delegation from the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) and FIFA called on Minister for Defence Khawaja Muhammad Asif here on Thursday to discuss the promotion and development of football in Pakistan.

The delegation was led by Shaikh Salman Ebrahim Bin Al Khalifa, President of the AFC, Senior Vice President of FIFA, and a distinguished member of the Bahrain

Royal Family, said a press release.

He was accompanied by Datuk Seri Windsor John, General Secretary AFC; Ahmad Abdul Samad, Staff Officer to the AFC President; Syed Mohsen Gilani, President of the Pakistan Football Federation (PFF), Ali Akram, Director Legal PFF and Mr. Eyab Ahmed (Digital Media & PR consultant / Member Board of investment).

During the meeting, the Defence Minister welcomed the delegation and reaffirmed the Government of Pakistan's full support for the

Pakistan Football Federation (PFF).

He expressed his optimism about the future of football in Pakistan and underscored the importance of taking the sport to new heights through international collaboration, youth engagement, and improved infrastructure.

Shaikh Salman Ebrahim Bin Al Khalifa commended the efforts of the PFF and appreciated the Government's role in supporting sports initiatives. He assured the AFC's and FIFA's continued cooperation in strengthening Pakistan's football ecosystem and helping nurture local talent.

The Defence Minister reiterated that Pakistan is committed to creating an enabling environment for the growth of football and welcomed future collaborative projects with AFC and FIFA aimed at talent development and international exposure.

The meeting concluded with a mutual commitment to work together for the revival and advancement of football in Pakistan.

## President Zardari appreciates Qatar's role in promoting peace, understanding through media diplomacy

PEAK POINT

DOHA: Nasser Bin Faisal Bin Khalifa Al Thani, Director General of Al Jazeera Media Network, called on President Asif Ali Zardari in Doha on Thursday and discussed matters of mutual interest.

Welcoming the Director General, President Zardari appreciated Qatar's warm hospitality and the excellent meetings held with the Qatari leadership, including His Highness Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, the Amir of Qatar, the Prime Minister, and the Minister for Defence.

The President commended Al Jazeera's global role in promoting objective journalism and fostering understanding among nations. He lauded Qatar's principled stance on regional and international issues, particularly its lead-



ership in efforts to end the suffering of the Palestinian people and bring peace to Gaza.

Nasser Bin Faisal Bin Khalifa Al Thani thanked the President for the opportunity to call on him and appreciated Pakistan's support and solidarity with Qatar during the recent crisis and its consistent advocacy for the people of Palestine.

The Director General informed the President that a high-powered Al Jazeera delegation would soon visit Pakistan to gain Pakistan's perspective on key regional and global issues.

## Gilani calls for stronger Pakistan-Iran parliamentary, economic cooperation

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Acting President Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani met Dr Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, Speaker of the Islamic Consultative Assembly of Iran, and members of his delegation, who called on him at Aiwan-e-Sadr on Thursday and discussed matters of mutual interest. The meeting was followed by a luncheon in their honour.

The Acting President said that Pakistan and Iran enjoy deep-rooted bonds of faith, history and culture, which continue to define their friendship and cooperation. He said that parliamentary engagement provides an important channel to advance understanding and promote cooperation for the benefit of the people of both countries.

President Gilani emphasised the need to further strengthen political dialogue, economic connectivity and people-to-people exchanges. He highlighted the role of regular interaction between parliamentary committees and friendship groups in promoting coop-

eration on issues such as border management, counter-narcotics and facilitation for pilgrims.

Mr Gilani said Pakistan wishes to significantly enhance bilateral trade with Iran as agreed during a meeting between President Asif Ali Zardari and Iranian President Dr Masoud Pezeshkian held in August 2025. The Acting President also called for greater collaboration between the two countries in education, culture and youth linkages through academic and medical cooperation and exchange programmes. A wide range of subjects, including bilateral trade, overall bilateral relations, the regional situation and international developments, were also discussed. Both reaffirmed their commitment to deepening cooperation in all fields and to continuing close consultation on matters of common interest. Dr Ghalibaf thanked President Gilani for the warm welcome and said that Iran regarded Pakistan as a brotherly country and a trusted neighbour. He echoed the sentiments expressed during the Iranian President's

## BISP strengthens partnership to boost social protection in merged districts

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: The Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) has reaffirmed its commitment to expanding social protection and poverty alleviation efforts in Pakistan's merged districts.

This was underscored during a meeting between BISP Chairperson Senator Rubina Khalid and Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Merged Districts, Mr. Mubarak Zeb, at the BISP Headquarters on Thursday.

The two sides discussed ongoing and future initiatives aimed at improving the living standards of vulnerable families in the merged areas.

Mubarak Zeb praised BISP's significant role in supporting low-income communities and shared recommendations to further enhance the programme's outreach and effectiveness. Chairperson Rubina Khalid assured that BISP continues to prioritize the merged districts, utilizing all available resources to ensure that financial assistance reaches deserving households transparently and efficiently. Both sides agreed to continue close collaboration.

## 'Rwanda-Pakistan virtual business forum' paves way for stronger trade ties



PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Rwanda's High Commissioner to Pakistan, Harerimana Fatou, reaffirmed her country's readiness to support all private-sector ventures between Pakistan and Rwanda during a virtual business meeting jointly organized by the Rwanda High Commission in Pakistan and the Rwanda Development Board (RDB).

Highlighting the shared vision

of South-South cooperation, High Commissioner Fatou said both nations are committed to deepening trade and investment linkages across multiple sectors, said a press release issued here on Thursday.

"Rwanda serves as a gateway to East Africa, while Pakistan stands as a vibrant market economy in South Asia — together, we can drive meaningful outcomes through constructive business collaboration," she said.

## Minister calls for regional cooperation to confront growing water challenges

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Climate Change Dr Shazra Mansab Ali Khan on Thursday called for stronger national planning and regional cooperation to confront Pakistan's growing water and climate challenges, warning that inaction could deepen existing environmental and economic vulnerabilities.

Pakistan is among the countries most at risk from climate change despite contributing less than one percent to global greenhouse gas emissions, said the state minister while addressing the closing session of Pakistan Water Week 2025 in Islamabad. "The world emits greenhouse



gases, but Pakistan pays the price. Our glaciers are melting, rainfall patterns are changing, and our people are suffering," she told delegates.

Dr Shazra warned that climate-induced challenges such as glacial melt and unpredictable weather were threatening livelihoods and the economy, urging greater global cooperation to address them.



ISLAMABAD: Acting President Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani in a meeting with H.E Dr Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, Speaker of the Islamic Consultative Assembly of Iran.

## Pakistan calls for stronger global education and UNESCO reform at Samarkand Conference

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Federal Education and Professional Training, Wajiha Qamar, presented Pakistan's national statement at the 43rd session of the UNESCO General Conference in Samarkand, Uzbekistan. Representatives from 194 member states attended the session.

Wajiha Qamar reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to UNESCO's mission of advancing education, science, culture, and communication as tools for peace, progress, and sustainable growth, said in a

press release received here. She underlined the importance of collective international action and cooperation at a time when the world is confronting challenges such as conflict, disinformation, and inequality. Speaking on education reforms, the Minister highlighted Pakistan's focus on building a system that equips youth with future-oriented and skill-based education through inclusive and technology-driven approaches. She noted that Pakistan's development agenda prioritizes education that links learning to employment and innovation. Wajiha also men-



tioned Pakistan's support for educational programs in Afghanistan, Palestine, Africa, and Small Island Developing States (SIDS). She said Pakistan has awarded 4,500 fully funded scholarships to

Afghan students, with one-third reserved for women, reflecting the country's focus on empowering regional youth through education. Calling attention to the humanitarian situation in

Gaza, Ms Qamar urged UNESCO to take a central role in rebuilding the region's educational and cultural infrastructure following the ceasefire. She emphasized the need to accelerate global efforts to provide education to the 272 million children currently out of school worldwide. Addressing organizational challenges, Wajiha called for reform within UNESCO to make it more efficient, transparent, and responsive to member states. She urged for improved financial sustainability through predictable and flexible funding that supports the organiza-

tion's core priorities. Reaffirming Pakistan's commitment to UNESCO's science and environment programs, Ms Qamar expressed support for initiatives such as the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission, the Intergovernmental Hydrological Programme, and the Man and the Biosphere Programme.

She said these efforts play a vital role in building global resilience and promoting sustainable development.

Concluding her statement, Wajiha said Pakistan will continue to work closely with UNESCO.