



**Population, climate
biggest challenges:
Aurangzeb**



**Pakistan to host
Pak-China health
business summit**



**Pakistan, SCO agree to
strengthen cultural cooperation
ahead of 2027 chairmanship**

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PM Shehbaz directs FBR officials to hold monthly meetings with Karachi businesses

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday directed senior officials of the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) to visit Karachi during the first week of every month to engage directly with the business community and address their concerns, as he chaired a meeting to review tax reforms and the revenue authority's performance.

Chairing the meeting, PM Shehbaz said the government's objective was to improve the ease of doing business, promote investment and exports, and make the tax system more transparent and simpler to strengthen the confidence of the business community, according to a statement issued by the Prime Minister's Office.

Describing the business community as "the backbone of the national economy", he said businesses should be provided with every possible facilitation to help increase production and boost exports.

The prime minister directed the FBR to work closely with taxpayers and ensure their legitimate concerns were resolved on a priority basis. He also said companies complying with tax laws would be officially recognised and encouraged. PM Shehbaz said Pakistan's economy was "on the path to stability" and described the current year as one focused on economic growth and expanding business activity. Officials briefed the meeting on the implementation of ongoing FBR reforms and measures aimed at improving tax collection.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a review meeting on the affairs of Federal Board of Revenue.

At least 4 injured, including police official, in attack on Bannu police station

PEAK POINT



BANNU: At least four people, including a police official, were injured on Wednesday after terrorists attacked a police station in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Bannu district, triggering a

heavy exchange of fire with security personnel. Bannu District Police Officer Captain (ret'd) Muhammad Furqan Bilal confirmed the incident, while the administration of the local hospital confirmed the casualties. According to reports, the attackers attempted to ram a vehicle loaded with explosives into Miryan Police Station, triggering a powerful blast. Police sources said that after the blast, a heavy exchange of fire continued for a considerable time between the terrorists and police personnel, while security was further tightened in the area. Additional police contingents reached the site, while members of the Police Peace Committee also arrived at the scene, the sources added. Reports said the sound of the explosion was heard from a considerable distance. The blast also damaged the police station building and nearby residential areas. Prior to the attack on the police station, terrorists blew up a previously damaged bridge on the route to the station in an attempt to hinder reinforcements and rescue services.

IRGC warns of blocking more waterways after Hormuz as US renews blockade of Iranian ports

PEAK POINT



IRAN: Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) threatened to close "all other export corridors that benefit the US and its allies", Iranian media reported on Wednesday, after Tehran shut the Strait of Hormuz and the US reimposed a naval blockade of Iranian ports.

The IRGC said the renewed US blockade had cut off oil and gas exports to the world, including "America's economic rivals", and warned that routes serving US and allied interests could also be shut, Iran's state news agency, IRNA, reported on Wednesday.

"Regional energy exports are either shared by all or denied to all," the IRGC said in its statement. It also said that the Strait of Hormuz would remain closed until "the end of America's evils". The vital Strait of Hormuz, which served as the passage for one-fifth of the world's oil and gas supply daily during peacetime, is now at the centre of a flare-up in the US-Israeli war on Iran that has rattled the Middle East and pushed up global energy prices. Analysts have said Iran has also been signalling it may use the Houthi in Yemen to the Bab-el-Mandeb gateway to the Red Sea, opening a new front against Washington and putting two of the world's most vital energy arteries at risk. The narrow gateway links the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden, through which Saudi oil exports and a substantial share of global shipping pass.

Dar meets SCO secretary general, reaffirms Pakistan's commitment to advancing its objectives

PEAK POINT



ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar on Wednesday met with the secretary general of the Shanghai

Cooperation Organisation (SCO), Nurlan Yermekbayev, and reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to advancing its objectives, the Foreign Office (FO) said.

In a post on X, the FO said that Dar received Yermekbayev, with the two holding a "productive exchange" on the SCO priorities and ways to further strengthen cooperation among member states in key areas, including economy, transport, and connectivity.

"They also exchanged views on regional and international developments. The secretary general commended Pakistan's constructive contributions to promoting regional peace, stability, and cooperation," the FO said.

"The secretary general shared his perspective and proposals for further enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of the SCO, and briefed DPM Dar on preparations for the forthcoming SCO Council of Foreign Ministers Meeting in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan," it said.

Police say Muslim man stabbed multiple times in US over his religion

PEAK POINT

UTAH: A man was arrested in Utah for stabbing a Muslim man multiple times and stated that he targeted the victim because of the victim's religion, police said in court records on Tuesday.

Police said the suspect told them he "intends to kill Muslims" and that he constituted "a substantial danger to the public if released based on his violent actions ... ideologies and pre-planned mass casualty events".

The incident took place inside the Valley Fair Mall.

Bilawal terms AJK situation concerning, says Kashmir cause, Pakistan's reputation will be harmed if it persists

PEAK POINT

MUZAFFARABAD: PPP Chairperson Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari said on Wednesday that the situation in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) since last month was "very concerning", and the longer it persisted, the more harm would be caused to the Kashmir cause and Pakistan's reputation.

Bilawal expressed these views while addressing his party's office bearers and ticket holders in AJK, where he arrived on Tuesday for an unscheduled visit ahead of July 27 elections in the region. AJK has been seized by protests and deadly clashes between law enforcers and protesters from the recently proscribed Joint Awami Action Committee (JAAC) ahead of the polls. The matter at the cen-

tre of the tensions is JAAC's demand for the



abolition of 12 seats in the region's Legislative Assembly that are reserved for refugees from Indian-occupied Jammu and Kashmir who settled in mainland Pakistan after 1947.

Addressing his party's workers against this backdrop, Bilawal said, "If someone uses inappropriate language against Kashmiris, we will be heartbroken." He added,

"And if someone speaks up against our army, we



can't tolerate that as well." He emphasised that Pakistan's armed forces, which had defeated India during Marka-i-Haq last year, were their "red line".

Turning his attention to the present situation in AJK, he said it was surely "very concerning".

"The longer it persists, the more harm will be caused to the Kashmir cause and Pakistan's reputation and position," he

added.

At this point, he also highlighted the global situation, saying "big changes are taking place and conspiracies are under way globally". And in this situation, the role of Pakistan and Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir was "significant", he said.

He continued, "Pakistan's role, our field marshal's role is before you in this situation; Pakistan is playing its role as Israel conspires against Iran; Pakistan has responded to India's attacks; [...] Pakistan and its armed forces are responding to terrorists sent by India via Afghanistan to carry out attacks in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan; entire Pakistan is ready to respond to Modi as he weaponises water."

3 more terrorists killed as Operation Shaban continues in Balochistan: state media



PEAK POINT

QUETTA: Three more terrorists have been killed as security forces and law enforcers continue to carry out Operation Shaban in Balochistan jointly, state media reported on Wednesday, citing security sources. According to state-run Pakistan TV, the latest casualties have taken the total tally of terrorists killed during the operation to 88. It further reported that 126 terrorists had been killed in Operation Shaban and other intelligence-based operations in the province since July 5. Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi commended the security forces after the latest operations and said the ongoing campaign against terrorist elements was progressing successfully, according to state-run APP. Operation Shaban was launched in retaliation for a deadly attack on a police.



Pakistan cricket team in West Indies to play Test series



The two best-performing teams in the 'Super 10' will automatically secure a semi-final spot, with a new eliminator stage to decide their opponents.



August: Second Test, Queen's Park Oval, Port of Spain.

[illegible]

The event will be held at Royal Nabab, Western Avenue, Johar Building, London, with an entry fee of £50 per seat. Fans attending the ceremony will also have the opportunity to present gifts and donations in support of Sarfraz Nawaz's autobiography.



Pakistan to Host Major China Health Investment Conference on July 17-18 Around 160 Chinese companies and 340 Pakistani businesses expected to participate in Islamabad event

NADEEM TANOLI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan will host a major two day business conference with China on July 17 and 18 to promote investment and cooperation in medicines, vaccines, medical equipment and other areas of the health sector. Around 160 Chinese companies, represented by nearly 180 delegates, are expected to participate in the conference. About 340 Pakistani companies and business representatives will also attend, taking the total number of participants to around 500. The details were shared during a press conference addressed by Federal Minister for National Health Services Mustafa Kamal, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Industries and Production Haroon Akhtar Khan and Federal Minister for the Board of Investment Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh. Officials said the conference would be different

from traditional business events because participating Pakistani and Chinese companies had already been in contact with each other for about one month. They said the companies would not meet for the first time at the conference. Instead, they had already discussed possible projects, partnerships and investment opportunities. The conference will focus on six main areas of healthcare and pharmaceutical production. These areas include active pharmaceutical ingredients, biotechnology and vaccines, medical devices and advanced technology, generic medicines, clinical trials and traditional herbal medicines. Active pharmaceutical ingredients, commonly called APIs, are the main raw materials used to produce medicines. Health Minister Mustafa Kamal said Pakistan manufactures around 85 per cent of its medicines locally, but imports about 90 per cent of the raw materials needed

to make them. He said local production of these materials could reduce Pakistan's import bill, save foreign currency, create jobs and possibly lower production costs. The minister expected companies to sign business agreements during the conference rather than limiting the event to general discussions or non-binding memorandums of understanding. He said detailed preparations had been underway for five to six weeks and several meetings had been held between the ministries, government departments and organisers. The Pakistan Embassy in China, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Board of Investment, the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan, the Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan and other departments are involved in organising the event. Officials said investment opportunities would also be presented in biotechnology, vaccines and

modern medical devices. Officials said seven or eight participating companies had shown interest in manufacturing vaccines in Pakistan. He said Chinese companies were also interested in producing pharmaceutical raw materials and carrying out clinical trials in the country. The government believes that local production will help Pakistan reduce its dependence on imported medicines, equipment and raw materials. Haroon Akhtar said the government was following around 600 agreements and memorandums signed with China during the past eight months. According to him, nearly 30 per cent of the projects had entered the implementation stage, including land acquisition and the start of construction work. He also said Pakistan had received \$3.65 billion in foreign direct investment after 11 years, while agreements and joint ventures worth about \$9 billion had

emerged from an earlier conference in Beijing. These figures were presented by the minister during the press briefing. Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh said the government was also working to support small and medium sized businesses and attract investment in export based industries. He said Pakistan needed longterm economic policies and greater cooperation between political parties to achieve steady economic growth. The ministers said the government was trying to simplify business regulations and reduce delays in licences and approvals. They also highlighted the Karachi Industrial Park, where land is expected to be offered through a lease system instead of being sold. Officials said the model was designed to ensure that land was used for factories rather than being purchased for resale at higher prices. Companies receiving land would be required to estab-

lish industries within a fixed period and meet export targets. During the press conference, journalists raised questions about medicine prices, the quality of locally produced drugs and whether foreign investment would directly benefit ordinary people. Mustafa Kamal said the pharmaceutical industry had grown by 38 per cent during the year. He added that companies accused of unusually large price increases had been issued show cause notices and would be required to explain their actions. The minister said future investment in local raw material production and medical manufacturing could create jobs, save dollars and strengthen the health sector. The government expects the July 17-18 conference to produce new agreements and joint projects between Pakistani and Chinese companies.

CDA Chairman calls for global collaboration to strengthen Islamabad's green future

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of the Capital Development Authority (CDA), Lt. (Retd.) Sohail Ashraf reaffirmed the Authority's commitment to making Islamabad greener, more environmentally sustainable and aesthetically vibrant

through collaborative initiatives with national and international partners.

Speaking at a tree plantation event organised by The Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA) at the Ankara Park for leaving a lasting green legacy, the

CDA chairman said Islamabad's identity has always been closely associated with its lush greenery and natural beauty, emphasizing that environmental preservation remains at the heart of the capital's development strategy.

"I think this forum is beautiful, and Islamabad is beautiful. Whenever you visit Islamabad, the fundamental focus is on greenery," he said, adding that the city's green landscape significantly contributes to its unique character and quality of life.

Lt. (Retd.) Sohail Ashraf described the tree plantation campaign as an important milestone in promoting environmental sustainability, noting that it was the first Green Initiative event he had attended since assuming his responsibilities. Highlighting the importance of international

cooperation, he said the CDA was actively engaging with several friendly countries to advance green development initiatives. He said discussions were underway with Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan on cooperation in environmental protection.

Opinion & Editorial

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Managing fault lines

Pakistan's political divide has once again entered a phase where confrontation appears easier than compromise. The debate within PTI over Aleema Khan's call for a long march hints at a deeper political impasse. PTI has announced its support for the proposed mobilisation against the incumbents, maintaining that every effort to secure the release of Imran Khan and press for his political demands will be backed by the party. Yet, concerns expressed by some PTI leaders about the risks associated with another major protest cannot be ignored. The current situation however cannot be viewed only through the lens of PTI's internal challenges. The larger issue is the continued inability of Pakistan's political leadership to establish a workable framework for disagreement. An impasse between the government and the PTI demonstrates that, despite repeated claims from both sides about the need for political stability, meaningful engagement remains difficult. The ruling coalition maintains that political disputes must be addressed through constitutional and legal channels, while also asserting its responsibility to maintain public order. This position is understandable from a governance perspective. However, political stability cannot depend solely on administrative measures.

Back to war

Zahid Hussain
THE tentative ceasefire has effectively collapsed even before the US and Iran could begin technical-level talks. Renewed American strikes and Iranian retaliation now threaten the interim deal barely a month after it was signed. The two countries are sliding back towards war: Donald Trump has announced the resumption of the blockade, while Iran has closed the Strait of Hormuz. The US president has also notified Congress that the conflict with Iran is on.

Trump's escalatory rhetoric — threatening to seize control of the strategic waterway and charge other countries for guarding it — may be dismissed as one of his usual bombastic flourishes, yet it has added to the tension. America's escalation, coming a day after the delayed funeral of the supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who was killed on the first day of the war on Feb 28, has stoked public anger in Iran. Many are calling for revenge.

Although a return to full-fledged war may not be imminent, the latest developments have made it far harder to reach a negotiated peace deal. The situation is half-war, half-peace, keeping the world on edge. The latest hostilities were apparently triggered by the strikes of Iran's Revolutionary Guard on two tankers passing through the Strait of Hormuz for failing to follow instructions.

There may be an element of truth to the argument that

Iran, by targeting Qatari and Saudi tankers, has overplayed its leverage, giving Trump an opportunity to hit back. But it is also a fact that Iran's action was provoked by the US attempt to guide commercial ships via the Omani route. Iran insists that its own waters offer the only viable route through the Strait of Hormuz for commercial vessels. For Iran, control of the strategic strait has become a key source of leverage; one Iranian official is quoted as saying it is more important than "dozens of atomic bombs".

The latest events will make it far harder for Iran and the US to reach a negotiated peace deal.

Indeed, the Iranian action could have been avoided, but the US response was extraordinarily severe. The US strikes have mainly targeted civilian infrastructure, and Trump has rescinded the two-month sanction relief on Iranian oil exports.

The move may severely damage an already collapsing Iranian economy, yet there is no sign of Iran capitulating. Its retaliatory strikes on US bases in surrounding Gulf countries demonstrate Tehran's continued military capacity to hit back. Taken together, the hostilities have pushed the situation back to where it stood before the ceasefire and temporary peace deal — in fact, it has grown even worse.

Iran's retaliatory strikes have also strained its relations with the Gulf countries, which had appeared to ease after the ceasefire. The closure of

Hormuz may not go down well with other countries that had stayed out of the US aggression. The spike in international oil prices could worsen an already recessionary situation.

Most alarming is the fact that the conflict could expand across the region and beyond. Interestingly, Iran's nuclear issue, which the US described as the main reason for going to war, has receded into the background, while Hormuz, which was not an issue at all when the war started, has become the major point of contention.

Trump's latest move — seeking control of the waterway and charging commercial vehicles 20pc on cargo value for protection services — has added a more explosive dimension. "I want to be reimbursed because we're protecting a very rich portion of the world, we're spending money, and ... we are going to be reimbursed for protection," Trump said. His words mark a dramatic shift in US policy and violate global norms of freedom of navigation. Any such move would heighten tension and cause further economic disruption in the region and beyond.

The contest has now turned into a battle for Hormuz. America and other countries had opposed Iran's control of the strait and suggestion to charge a toll. Trump's latest ambition to control Hormuz and collect service charges from oil-rich states amounts to an expansion of the military conflict.

Courtesy Dawn

The grief of Karbala

Syed Jalal Hussain

When the last light of Ashura fades, the world is drawn back to a desert where the sky burned red and a small caravan stood before the machinery of an empire. Karbala was a battlefield, but it was also the place where grief learned to speak. A grief so old that centuries have passed over it, yet alive enough to still enter homes and unsettle the soul.

Karbala is remembered as a story of courage. But after the swords had fallen silent and the dust had settled, another story began: the story of those who survived.

The story of Karbala continued through grief.

That grief became a force of its own, carried in sermons and testimonies through generations. Yazid could command armies, but he could not command memory. He could silence bodies, but not what those bodies came to represent. This is the enduring miracle of Karbala: its grief transformed into living testimony.

In the aftermath of Ashura, grief was carried by those with every reason to collapse beneath its weight. The women and children of Karbala were made to walk through humiliation and captivity, expected to be evidence of defeat. Instead, they became custodians of truth. In that journey from Karbala to Kufa and Damascus, grief acquired a language, becoming testimony against power and cruelty. No figure represents this more powerfully than Zainab bint Ali. If Hussain's stand revealed the courage of sacrifice, Zainab's voice revealed the courage of survival. Her grief rose with dignity, unbroken and unafraid. In the court of Yazid, with the horrors of Karbala still fresh in her heart, she spoke as though the battlefield itself had entered the room. Her sermon turned a spectacle of triumph into a reckoning. She showed that grief, when joined with truth, becomes more dangerous than any army.

Courtesy Tribune

Gilani calls for collective action on population planning, youth development



PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani Wednesday called for a national consensus on responsible population planning, emphasizing that Pakistan's future depends on empowering its youth through greater investment in education, healthcare and skills development.

Addressing a ceremony marking World Population Day 2026, the

Chairman Senate said Pakistan's growing population presents both a challenge and an opportunity.

He noted that with more than 65 percent of the population under the age of 30, the country possesses a significant demographic dividend that can only be realized through sustained investments in human development.

Highlighting the pressures of rapid population growth on healthcare, education, employment, water

resources and the environment, he stressed that population planning must be integrated into Pakistan's economic and development strategies.

He described family planning as a key tool for improving maternal and child health, reducing poverty and advancing sustainable development.

Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani called for cross-party cooperation and reaffirmed Parliament's commitment to supporting legislative and policy measures aimed at promoting responsible population planning and strengthening parliamentary oversight.

The Chairman Senate also urged political leaders, religious scholars, community representatives and the media to play their role in raising awareness and dispelling misconceptions regarding family planning, terming it a collective national responsibility. He commended the Ministry of National Health Services.

Population, climate biggest challenges: Aurangzeb

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, on Wednesday, warned that Pakistan's future potential could be severely undermined unless the country addresses rapid population growth and climate change, describing both as existential challenges that require sustained policy reforms, institutional coordination and long-term financing.

Addressing the World Population Day 2026 commemorative conference, Aurangzeb said the government's efforts had evolved from the National Population Stabilisation Plan to the National Population Council, bringing together civil and military leadership, provincial governments and the federation to ensure effective implementation.

"We have known the 'what'



and the 'why' for the longest time. The real question has always been the 'how' and the 'who,'" he said, adding that the council would help deliver results through clear targets, Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and regular performance reviews.

"You can only deliver what you can measure," Aurangzeb said, assuring the Health Ministry of the Finance Ministry's continued support.

He said governments often prepare budgets with short-term priorities in mind, but population growth and climate.

Pakistan, SCO agree to strengthen cultural cooperation ahead of 2027 chairmanship

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) on Wednesday agreed to further strengthen cooperation in culture, heritage conservation, tourism and people-to-people exchanges as the country prepares to assume the SCO Chairmanship in 2027. The understanding was reached during a meeting between Federal Minister for National Heritage and Culture Aurangzeb Khan Khichi and SCO Secretary-General Nurlan Yermekbayev at the Ministry of National Heritage and Culture.

Welcoming the SCO Secretary-General and his delegation, the minister reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to the objectives and principles of the SCO and said culture served as a bridge for peace, dialogue and mutual understanding. Highlighting Pakistan's rich civilizational heritage, including the Indus Valley Civilization, Gandhara Civilization, Buddhist heritage, Islamic architecture and diverse intangible cultural traditions, he said cultural diplomacy remained an effective tool for promoting regional harmony and cooperation. Khichi said Pakistan was ready to deep-

en collaboration with SCO member states in heritage conservation, museums, archaeology, cultural tourism, creative industries, handicrafts, performing arts and youth exchanges.

Pakistan, SCO agree to strengthen cultural cooperation ahead of 2027 chairmanship

Referring to Pakistan's growing role within the organization, the minister said the country was expected to assume the SCO Chairmanship in 2027 and host the 24th Meeting of the SCO Ministers of Culture.

He also highlighted Pakistan's proposal to designate Lahore as the SCO Tourism and Cultural Capital for 2026-27, saying preparations were under way for a year-long calendar of cultural activities in Lahore alongside major programmes in Islamabad and Karachi.

He informed the meeting that Pakistan planned to organize four flagship cultural events in Lahore, complemented by a series of programmes throughout the year, and said embassies and consulates of SCO member states in Pakistan would be invited to participate through cultural performances, exhibitions and cultural troupes.



ISLAMABAD: SCO Secretary-General H.E. Mr. Nurlan Yermekbayev calls on Federal Minister for National Heritage and Culture, Mr. Aurangzeb Khan Khichi, to discuss Pakistan's preparation for its forthcoming SCO Chairmanship, and advancing regional collaboration through cultural diplomacy.

Equipping youth with world-class digital skills top priority: Shaza Fatima

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication Shaza Fatima Khawaja on Wednesday said equipping Pakistani youth with world-class digital skills is the government's top priority.

In her message on World Youth Skills Day, she said women's active participation in the digital economy is essential to transforming Pakistan's future.

"We are providing women with excellent work-from-home opportunities in the IT sector and freelancing," she said.

The minister said it is the Prime Minister's vision that every young person should have access to quality education and excel in modern skills.

She said Pakistani youth have immense potential to compete globally in the field of information technology.

Through training in advanced technologies and artificial intelligence (AI), she said, young people are being prepared for the future.

Pakistan to host Pak-China health business summit

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for National Health Services Mustafa Kamal on Wednesday announced that Pakistan will host a major international health business event featuring around 160 Chinese companies and a business-to-business (B2B) conference. Addressing a press conference, the minister said that nearly 500 Pakistani and Chinese firms will attend the event to promote investment, technology transfer and collaboration in the health sector.

He said the upcoming Pakistan-China health business summit would focus on six key sectors, including biotechnology, vaccines, clinical trials, herbal medicine and other health-related



industries.

He said Pakistan currently imports nearly 90 percent of the raw materials required for its pharmaceutical industry.

He expressed confidence that the event would help promote local manufacturing, attract investment, facilitate technology transfer and encourage joint ventures between Pakistani and Chinese companies.

He said Pakistani and Chinese firms had been in contact for the past month.

Government moves to grant degree-awarding status to Pakistan Marine academy: Junaid Anwar

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs, Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chaudhry said on Wednesday that the government had taken another significant step towards upgrading the Pakistan Marine Academy into a degree-awarding institution by submitting a summary to the prime minister for in-principle approval.

In a statement, Junaid Chaudhry said consultations with all relevant stakeholders had already been completed and the required procedural formalities fulfilled.

He said that following the prime minister's in-principle approval, the summary would be



forwarded to the Ministry of Law for legal vetting before being placed before the federal cabinet for final approval. Junaid Chaudhry said the proposed upgrade was part of the government's broader agenda to modernise the maritime sector and bring maritime education in line with international standards. The minister said discussions were underway with leading.

Govt to act against media organisations over layoffs, salary cuts; ad policy linked to workers' welfare: Tarar

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaulah Tarar on Wednesday announced a series of measures to protect media workers, strengthen mainstream media and reform the government's advertising policy, warning that media organisations resorting to layoffs, salary cuts or non-payment of wages could face suspension of official advertisements or a downward revision of their advertisement rates.

Responding to the Senate Standing Committee on

Information and Broadcasting, chaired by Senator Sarmad Ali, the minister said the government's foremost priority was the welfare of media employees and ensuring that public funds released to media organisations benefited journalists and other workers.

"We want government advertisement payments to translate into employees' welfare," he said, adding that the Ministry had already developed a mechanism with the Pakistan Broadcasters Association (PBA) under which media organisations



were expected to clear employees' outstanding salaries whenever the government released pending dues.

Citing an example, Tarar said the government had suspended advertisements to

Suno News after it laid off employees, adding that several workers were reinstated following discussions with the channel's management.

"If any newspaper or television channel lays off employees, cuts salaries or

fails to pay wages, we have the authority to revise its advertisement rates downward and stop official advertisements in accordance with the law," he said.

He said existing legal provisions already allowed employees to file complaints regarding non-payment of salaries, adding that such complaints were regularly received and processed.

The minister said the government's digital advertising policy, originally introduced in 2021 and amended in 2022, had created a transparent framework for digital

advertising and had subsequently been adopted by several provincial governments.

He said the policy incorporated Google Analytics, web traffic statistics, serving reports and an independent third-party verification mechanism to authenticate views and other digital performance indicators.

Tarar said digital media was a self-sustaining platform that generally did not require financial support and stressed that the government only purchased advertising according to its communication requirements.