

Pakistan, Saudi Arabia pledge to strengthen defence ties amid regional challenges

Islamabad(News Desk) Pakistan and Saudi Arabia on Thursday reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening defence and security co-operation and recognising the importance of collaborative efforts in addressing regional security challenges, state-run Radio Pakistan reported. Saudi Arabia and Pakistan have long shared a multifaceted relationship rooted in mutual economic interests, strategic military cooperation, and shared Islamic heritage. Historically, these ties have encompassed economic assis-

tance, energy supplies and military collaboration, with Saudi Arabia being a significant source of financial aid and oil for Pakistan. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif arrived in Jeddah on Wednesday for a four-day official visit to engage in talks with the Saudi leadership on strengthening cooperation in various economic sectors. In a bilateral meeting in Jeddah today, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS) and PM Shehbaz discussed bilateral ties and cooperation between the two countries.

In a post on social media platform X, PM Shehbaz wrote: "Honoured to meet His Royal Highness Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud in Jeddah today. We had a most productive discussion on ways to further strengthen Pakistan-Saudi Arabia ties in trade, investment, energy and security. Thanked His Royal Highness for the Kingdom's consistent support to Pakistan. "Our enduring friendship and shared vision for prosperity is taking our bilateral relations to new

heights and transforming it into a mutually beneficial economic partnership," he continued. "Lauded the pivotal role played by His Royal Highness and the Kingdom in efforts to bring peace in the Middle East and in Ukraine." The high-level delegation accompanying the premier includes Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, Chief of Army Staff General Asim Munir, Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz, federal ministers and senior officials.



Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif meets Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman on Thursday

UK includes Hasan Nawaz in 'deliberate tax defaulters' list

LONDON: (News Desk) Almost a year after he was declared bankrupt by a UK court, Hasan Nawaz, the son of former prime minister Nawaz Sharif, was included on a list of "deliberate tax defaulters" by the UK government.

The list, which was published on Tuesday, features the names of scores of individuals and companies that the HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) has issued penalties to for either making deliberate errors in their tax returns or then deliberately failing to comply with their tax obligations. Hasan Nawaz's name is the second in the list, which appears to be organised in descending order of penalties and tax owed to the UK government. It identifies Hasan Nawaz as a property developer, with listed addresses at Avenfield House as well as 1 Hyde Park Place — the property at the centre of the National Crime Agency's 2019 landmark £190 million settlement with property tycoon Malik Riaz.

SC establishes 24/7 anti-graft hotline



ISLAMABAD: (News Desk) The Supreme Court on Wednesday established a dedicated anti-corruption hotline, providing a confidential platform to complainants to report incidents of graft, favouritism, or any form of corrupt practices, without fear of retaliation.

The initiative was made in line with Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Yahya Afridi's determination to foster an environment free of corruption and guided by the principles of accountability and fairness, says an official handout.

The statement said the whistle blower's identity will be protected and the choice of remaining anonymous will be fully respected.

The hotline is accessible through multiple channels, including phone, online portal, email, and text messages, and supports communication in Urdu and English. It operates 24/7, allowing citizens to report incidents at any time, ensuring inclusivity and ease of access. All complaints submitted will be overseen independently by an impartial official reporting directly to the CJP, maintaining transparency and objectivity throughout the process.

Each complaint will be thoroughly tracked and investigated with resolutions provided within a time frame — 30 days for simple cases and up to 60 days for complex cases.

Residents block Karachi's Mauripur Road against anti-encroachment operation

KARACHI: (News Desk) At least three residents of the Yousinabad area were taken into custody when they blocked the Mauripur Road and put up resistance against an anti-encroachment operation launched by the Karachi Port Trust (KPT) on Wednesday.

A spokesperson for the KPT said that the operation at Yousinabad was launched under the supervision of Pakistan Rangers, Sindh.

DIG-South Syed Asad Raza told Dawn that police and district administration were not informed about the action.

He said area residents pelted KPT administration and law enforcers with stones and blocked the main Mauripur Road. He said that three suspects were briefly detained.

KPT claims to have retrieved seven acres in Yousinabad.

A Rangers spokesperson told Dawn that the paramilitary force had been taking part in the anti-encroachment drive on the directives of the federal government.

He said the prime minister had directed all law enforcement agencies, including Rangers, to 'facilitate' the KPT to get their

1,100 acres of encroached lands vacated.

"The KPT conducted the operation on illegally encroached land and did not disturb the allottees of Yousinabad. The fishermen, who were allotted land in 1993, were not disturbed," the spokesperson said, adding that during the operation, "a recovery of seven acres illegally encroached by land mafia has been made".

The spokesperson clarified that the operation was carried out against two land grabbers, who cut mangroves and reclaimed land from the sea to set up illegal housing

schemes.

"In the last two and a half months, about 80 acres of prime land worth Rs 60 billion has been recovered," he claimed.

MNA condemns action Pakistan Peoples Party MNA from the area Abdul Qadir Patel condemned the action against the residents including women.

In a statement, he said that he contacted the KPT chairman and Karachi commissioner and asked them to call a meeting to this effect immediately.

He said any action without giving a legal notice to the residents would be deemed as "illegal".



Paramilitary soldiers and enraged protesters face off on Mauripur Road, on Wednesday

Depriving women of their inheritance is 'un-Islamic', Shariat Court rules

ISLAMABAD: (News Desk) In a landmark ruling, the Federal Shariat Court (FSC) on Wednesday declared all or any custom, by virtue of which any female member of a family is being or has been denied or deprived of her right of inheritance, have no legal force whatsoever. The 21-page judgement,

authored by Justice Dr Syed Muhammad Anwar of the four-member bench that also comprised Chief Justice Iqbal Hameedur Rehman, Justice Khadim Hussain M. Sheikh and Justice Ameer Mohammad Khan, came on a petition moved against the custom of 'Chaddar' or 'Parchi' — prevalent in parts of Ban-

nu district — that either deprived women of inheritance right granted by the Holy Quran and Sunnah, or forced them to accept a share of less value than their inheritance through jirgas.

The Shariat Court declared the practice un-Islamic and illegal, having no legal force, subject such crimi-

nal actions to punishment. In her petition, Syeda Fouzia Jalaal Shah not only highlighted the practices prevailing in Bannu, but also sought relief for her mother, Syeda Iftikhar Bibi, who was allegedly deprived of a share in her father's and husband's inheritances due to the local custom.

National policy must address health challenges, says minister

ISLAMABAD: (News Desk) Minister of State for National Health Services Dr Malik Mukhtar Ahmad on Wednesday emphasised that the National Health and Population Policy (NHPP) 2025-34 must address the country's evolving health challenges and align with global health standards besides ensuring these policies are integrated both at national and provincial levels for greater efficiency.

Presiding over a meeting to discuss the policy, the state minister outlined key priorities for the policy's development and suggested IT systems, including electronic medical records (EMR), for improving surveillance, accountability and health data management in the country, particularly at union council level.

The meeting was attended by representatives of the World Bank, UNFPA, the population wing of health ministry and other key stakeholders.

Shopkeepers, customers survive robbers' firing in Islamabad

ISLAMABAD: (News Desk) Shopkeepers and customers narrowly escaped bullets during an armed robbery at a barber shop in the federal while in other incidents, robbers looted cash and valuables in strikes at five locations.

The police reported that a gang of three robbers looted a barber shop located within the Sihala police jurisdiction and resorted to firing and beating.

They said the incident took place at the barber shop of a citizen named Mohammad Sajjid where three persons armed with weapons raided.

One of them remained outside the shop while two entered it and held up the shopkeepers and customers at gunpoint.

The two robbers also started beating up the barbers and customers black and blue, they added. Later they looted mobile phones and cash from those held at gunpoint.

The robbers also resorted to firing and escaped from the spot along with the looted booty.

Likewise, another gang of robbers looted a shop located in the limits of Shahzad Town police station.

The incident took place at a building material shop located at Ghauri Town Phase 5B during Iftar.

Health minister asks Pims staff to treat patients with kindness in Islamabad

ISLAMABAD: (News Desk) Federal Minister for Health Syed Mustafa Kamal on his first visit to Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (Pims) on Wednesday urged doctors, paramedical staff and nurses to treat patients with kindness and professionalism.

"Patients come to hospitals to get best possible treatment for their loved ones and hope to return happily with the recovered relatives. A few kind words can be a source of healing for patients and their attendants," he said.

"We must ensure the provision of quality healthcare and do everything in our power to improve hospital services," he said.

During the visit, the hospital administration provided a detailed briefing to the minister. He was informed about the medical facilities available, the resources at hand, and the challenges faced by the hospital in delivering quality healthcare. Furthermore, the minister was updated on ongoing projects and the upgradation initiatives at Pims.

It was informed that Pims receives approximately 6,000 to 7,000 patients daily. The minister was also briefed on the construction of a new 200-bed emergency facility, which is expected to become functional by June.

Mustafa Kamal inquired about the various tests being conducted in the hospital's laboratories. He instructed hospital authorities to submit a comprehensive report on the challenges.

Policy for uniform standards of 'green projects' round the corner

KARACHI: (News Desk) Pakistan is set to launch its set of guidelines that would define the standards to classify sustainable economic activities based on their impact on climate adaptation and mitigation goals and fund them.

A meeting of the Senate Standing Committee on Climate Change and Environmental Coordination, held at the State Bank on Wednesday, was told that a draft of the 'National Green Taxonomy' would be launched by

next month.

The European Union, one of the few regions in the world to have a taxonomy, explains it as a classification system that "defines criteria for economic activities" that are aligned with national goals of cutting carbon emissions and other environmental goals.

Simply put, it will be a checklist of requirements that a company must meet to secure climate funding. For example, a steel manufacturer will have to curb emissions from factories,

prove ethical sourcing of raw material and have a plan to produce metal from recycled steel to qualify as a sustainable economic activity with minimal impact on climate.

'National Green Taxonomy' will set criteria to determine sustainable initiatives eligible for funding. While briefing the committee, State Bank (SBP) Governor Jameel Ahmad said the taxonomy will allow financial and non-financial companies to share a common defi-

nition of economic activities that can be considered environmentally sustainable.

He said much work on the project has been completed with technical assistance from the World Bank. It will be finalised within the next four months.

SBP Deputy Governor Saleemullah said the taxonomy would increase investment in green activity and facilitate transparency in the financial sector. It will help regulators, financial institutions, in-



vestors and the government make "informed decisions" on funding and scaling sustainable economic activities. The meeting was informed that Pakistan will be only t

he third country after Bangladesh and Sri Lanka to have a national taxonomy. The final draft of the guidelines will be available by the first week of April.