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Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs
Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chaudhry
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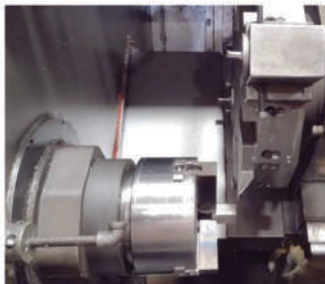
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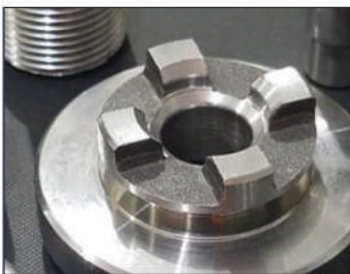
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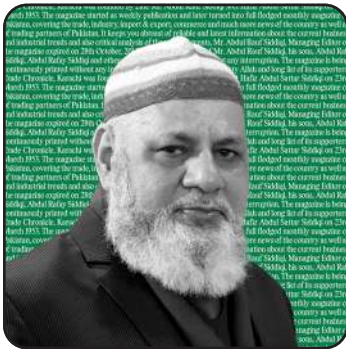
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❖ We begin with the name of Allah the Magnificent ❖

From the editor's desk

Pakistani ports are becoming hubs for regional trade



With the closure of the Strait of Hormuz and escalating conflict involving the USA, Israel, and Iran, global crude oil and product supply chains have been severely disrupted. Shipping lines carrying all kinds of cargo to and from Gulf countries are facing unprecedented challenges, forcing international fleets to seek safer alternatives. In this shifting maritime landscape, Pakistan has emerged as a new hub for transshipment and trade, with Karachi Port at the forefront of this transformation. The country's ports are now seen not only as regional gateways but also as strategic alternatives in a world where traditional routes have become increasingly unsafe.

Recent figures highlight the scale of this surge. Karachi Port handled more than 9,000 containers in the past month alone—surpassing the total throughput of the entire previous year. Pakistan's growing bunkering industry has already serviced over 100 vessels and is projected to generate billions of rupees in business over the next two years. These developments underscore the country's rising importance as a maritime gateway linking Central Asia, China, and South Asia, while offering global shipping companies secure alternatives amid Middle Eastern instability. The sheer pace of growth demonstrates how quickly Pakistan's ports are adapting to global shifts, positioning them as reliable nodes in international trade.

Pakistan's geographical position along the Arabian Sea provides natural connectivity to the Gulf States, East Africa, and South Asia. Experts believe that if Gwadar and Karachi are utilised effectively, Pakistan could become a major hub for regional transit trade. The opportunity is clear: with traditional sea routes compromised, Pakistan's ports are uniquely placed to absorb the redirected flow of global commerce and strengthen their role in international supply chains. Gwadar, with its deep-sea capacity, complements Karachi's established infrastructure, offering Pakistan a dual advantage that few regional competitors can match.

Together, these ports could anchor Pakistan's role in the Belt and Road Initiative and Central Asian trade corridors, further enhancing its strategic relevance. Reforms introduced by the Ministry of Maritime Affairs have further enhanced competitiveness. Port charges have been reduced by up to 60 per cent, while capacity enhancements—such as expanded terminal areas and clearance of abandoned cargo—have improved efficiency. A high-level facilitation committee, including senior customs officials, has been established to expedite decision-making and resolve longstanding issues.

Initiatives such as Roll-on/Roll-off shipping facilities for vehicle imports, supported by dedicated storage and parking infrastructure, are expected to create new trade and logistics opportunities. These reforms have been praised by stakeholders, who see them as evidence of a government willing to modernise and adapt to global demands. By reducing

costs and improving efficiency, Pakistan is sending a clear signal to international shipping lines that it is ready to compete. Despite these gains, challenges remain. Security is the foremost concern, as any military tension in or around the Arabian Sea could threaten Pakistan's ports and maritime routes, experts feared. Analysts stress the need for robust naval preparedness and regional cooperation to safeguard Pakistan's emerging role.

The risks are not limited to military conflict alone; piracy, cyber threats, and environmental vulnerabilities also pose challenges that must be addressed. Without a comprehensive security framework, the country's potential as a maritime hub could be undermined. Balancing optimism with realism, experts caution that Pakistan's rise as a transshipment hub will only be sustainable if these risks are managed effectively.

Looking ahead, modernisation projects, ranging from the digital transformation of port operations to sustainability initiatives, are positioning the Karachi Port Trust as a future-ready gateway. By harmonising tradition with innovation, KPT embodies a narrative that is both symbolic and substantive: a port aligned with heritage while addressing the demands of modern commerce. The introduction of digital systems promises greater transparency and efficiency, while sustainability projects aim to align Pakistan's ports with global environmental standards.

If reforms are sustained and investments in oil storage, refinery capacity, and port expansion are realised, Pakistan's ports could evolve from regional alternatives into global trade hubs—redefining the nation's role in international commerce and reinforcing its identity as "The Gateway to Pakistan."



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TEXTILE INDUSTRY

Jul-Feb exports rise 0.3pc YoY

Pakistan's textile exports during the first eight months (July–February) of the financial year 2025–26 registered a slight increase of USD 32 million, or 0.3 percent, reaching USD 12.249 billion on a year-on-year (YoY) basis. Data obtained from the Pakistan Textile Council (PTC) revealed that, on a month-on-month (MoM) basis, textile exports in February 2026 declined by USD 102 million compared to January, reflecting a negative growth of 7 percent. Exports stood at USD 1.315 billion.

According to PTC's analysis, "Trade Outlook of Pakistan - July–Feb 2025–26," the textile sector is maintaining cumulative stability but is facing a monthly slowdown. During the July–February period, agriculture and food exports stood at USD 3.58 billion, which is 32 percent lower compared to the same period last year.

The manufacturing and energy sectors showed positive growth of 0.2 percent, reaching USD 3.995 billion on a YoY basis. The mining sector exports recorded a growth of 22 percent, amounting to USD 567 million. Pakistan's exports to the Middle East increased by 7 percent



to USD 2.37 billion. Exports to the USA rose by 2 percent to USD 3.97 billion, while exports to South America registered an increase of 11 percent. While the country's textile exports to the following markets have witnessed a declining trend: the European Union (EU) by 2 percent and remained at USD 6.01 billion, the UK 3 percent decline, the ASEAN region 44 percent decline, Central Asian Republics (CARs) and Afghanistan 53 percent reduction, South Asia 18 percent reduction, and Africa 11 percent reduction.

Pakistan's trade deficit has widened to USD 24.98 billion in the first two months of FY26, with exports down and imports up, despite marginal increases in the textiles and apparel sector and the agriculture and food sector.

The country's exports reached to USD 20.462 billion during July–February of the current fiscal year (2025–26),

Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) said. According to the PBS data, the exports showed a decline of 7.30 percent as compared to exports of USD 22.073 billion during the July–February period of the last fiscal year (2024–25).

On the other hand, imports into the country increased by 8.06 percent, rising from USD 42.110 billion last year to USD 45.504 billion during July–February (2025–26). Based on the figures, the trade deficit during the first eight months was recorded at USD 25.042 billion against the deficit of USD 20.037 billion last year, showing an increase of 24.98 percent.

Meanwhile, on a year-on-year basis, the exports in February 2026 decreased by 8.76 percent to USD 2.272 billion compared to USD 2.490 billion in February 2025. The imports also witnessed a decrease of 1.61 percent, declining from USD 5.339 billion to USD 5.253 billion during the same period. On a month-on-month basis, the exports from the country decreased by 25.63 percent when compared to USD 3.055 billion during January 2026. The imports also decreased by 9.51 percent compared to USD 5.805 billion in January 2026, the PBS reported.

Courtesy - Business Recorder

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Transformation from community to nationhood

By Dr. Hasan Askari Rizvi

National days are observed not only to link the present with the past but also to pay tribute to the noble personalities that led the political struggle for the establishment of Pakistan as an independent and sovereign state. Their relentless efforts and the sacrifices of life and property by lakhs of people in the last phase of the struggle for independence are recalled.

There is an additional reason to understand the struggle for the making of Pakistan because Pakistan did not physically exist as a political entity on the global map before August 1947. However, there is enough historical material available to show that the regions that became the state of Pakistan had a peculiar physical and historical character that underlined their exclusive character. Similarly, the Muslims of the Indo-Pak Sub-continent maintained their separate socio-cultural and civilizational identity despite living with others in a geographical setting. It is important to examine how the exclusive character of a region and a distinct civilizational and historical identity of the Muslims of this Sub-continent turned into a nationhood that called for the establishment of a separate homeland.

Human beings have multiple identities. However, every identity does not turn into a national identity and a basis for the establishment of a sovereign and independent homeland. Therefore, it is a learning experience to examine how the Muslims of this Sub-continent were transformed from a separate community to a separate nation.

The transformation from a community to a nation was the outcome of the peculiar political and economic experience of the Muslim community during years of British rule in India. The British government directly assumed the governance of India in 1858, replacing the earlier system of indirect rule through the East India Company. In 1858-1947,

the British government gradually established a new state system derived from their British experience. The changes introduced by the new state system increased competition among various communities in India and made the Muslims conscious of their identity who felt the need for acquiring modern western education, including the English language, and organizing them politically to preserve and promote their civilization and historical identity inspired by the teachings and principles of Islam, their rights and interests in the new political system introduced by the British.

Their strategies to secure their distinct identity, rights and interests changed over time by "political learning" from their interaction with the other major community in British India and the British government.



This political journey of the Muslims in British India is a remarkable history of nation-making. A noteworthy date for this transformational journey is March 23, 1940, when the leading Muslim political party of India, the All-India Muslim League (AIML), formally asked for the establishment of a separate homeland for the Muslims of British India, who were, it was argued, a separate nation. This demand was made in the annual session of the AIML, held at Lahore, on March 22, 23, 24, 1940. It was a representative gathering of the Muslim leaders from all over India. Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, President of the All-India Muslim League, chaired the session. On March 23, the All-India Muslim League presented a resolution for the establishment of a separate state for the Muslims comprising the Muslim majority regions of British India. The Muslim leaders from different parts of India debated the resolution for two days on March 23 and 24, who fully

supported the demand for a separate homeland. It was in the final session on March 24 that this resolution was unanimously approved. The All-India Muslim League decided before the establishment of Pakistan to celebrate the Resolution on March 23 — the day the resolution was presented for an open debate.

The significance of the demand for a separate homeland can be appreciated if we focus on the fact that the Muslims of British India did not start their political struggle with a demand for a separate state. Initially, they demanded safeguards to protect their identity, rights and interests. This included the demand for a separate electorate to elect the representatives of the Muslims to the elected bodies (October 1906) and the establishment of All-India Muslim League as a political forum to discuss their problems and issues and present their demands to the British government (December 1906). They also demanded constitutional and legal guarantees for them from 1916 onwards. They also favoured federal system with provincial autonomy, hoping that they will have the governments of their choice in Muslim majority provinces.

Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah's famous speech at the AIML session in 1929, described as his Fourteen Points, was a catalogue of constitutional and political guarantees to protect their separate civilizational identity, and their rights and interests. They pursued these demands in the Roundtable Conferences in 1930-32.

In March 1940, the AIML shifted its strategy by advocating for a separate homeland for the Muslims and began defining their identity as a distinct nation. What factors contributed to this change? Over time, the Muslim leadership realized that the Congress Party, which represented the majority community, was unwilling to address their demand for constitutional guarantees and safeguards. The Congress Party wanted to establish its political hegemony in post-British India, discarding all Muslim demands. The most bitter experience for the Muslims was their mistreatment by the Congress-

led provincial governments in seven provinces after the provincial elections in 1937. These provincial governments functioned from July 1937 to October-November 1939 and openly discriminated against the Muslims for government jobs and introduced a system of education that projected Hindu religious and cultural values in the name of Indian identity and culture. The Muslim leadership learnt from all this experience over the years, especially from the Congress rule in the provinces, that constitutional commitments and federalism will not protect their identity, rights and interests under the Congress rule in an independent India. That the Congress Party would use its numerical advantage to dominate the governance system and threaten the civilizational and cultural identity of the Muslims and deny their rights and interests. They concluded that any future constitutional and political order in India must be based on the recognition of the existence of two major nations in British India, each with a distinctive cultural and civilizational heritage, history and political experiences, and divergent aspirations for the future.

The AIML leadership challenged the Congress Party-sponsored nationalism of "one Indian nation" with an alternative nationalism of two major nations in British India, the Muslims and the Hindus and others. The two-nation argument emphasized that the Muslims are a separate nation and as a distinct nation they need a separate homeland to protect and advance their national identity, religious and cultural orientations, and their political future. These views were articulated from 1938-39 onwards and presented in an AIML resolution on March 23, 1940. The major features of the AIML's Lahore Resolution for a separate homeland for the Muslims of British India are given below:

The resolution rejected the Government of India Act, 1935 that proposed a federal system, arguing that it did not suit the "peculiar conditions" of India. The resolution

demanding that the existing constitutional arrangements in India should be revamped and that the Muslims would not accept any constitutional plan unless it was framed "with their approval and consent."

The future constitutional framework should be based on the principle "that geographically contiguous units are demarcated into regions which should be so constituted with such territorial readjustments as may be necessary, that the areas in which the Muslims are numerically in a majority as in the Northwestern and Eastern zones of India should be grouped to constitute Independent States in which the constituent units shall be autonomous and sovereign."

The Lahore Resolution promised "adequate, effective and mandatory safeguards" to the religious minorities for "the protection of their religious, cultural, economic, political, administrative and other rights and interests in consultation with them."

The Resolution empowered the Working Committee of the AIML to prepare a constitutional scheme incorporating the principles set out in this resolution.

The text of the resolution did not include the word "Pakistan" but the press and the political leaders labelled it as the "Pakistan Resolution."

The notion of the Muslims as a separate nation was fully articulated in Quaid-i-Azam's speeches and statements in 1940-47. He published an article on the constitutional future of India in a British weekly magazine "Time and Tide," January 19, 1940, arguing that the "democratic systems based on the concept of a homogenous nation such as England are very definitely not applicable to heterogeneous countries such as India, and this simple fact is the root cause of all India's constitutional problems." He maintained that the Muslims and the Hindus were "two different nations." He was categorical in demanding that "no declaration regarding the question

of constitutional advance be made without the consent and approval of the All-India Muslim League, nor any constitution be framed and finally adopted by His Majesty's government and the British Parliament without such consent and approval." He further said in this article that the AIML stood for a "free India" but it was "irrevocably opposed to any federal objective which must necessarily result in a majority community rule under the guise of democracy and a parliamentary system of government."

Quaid-i-Azam's presidential address to the annual session of the All-India Muslim League at Lahore in March 1940 presented a comprehensive review of politics in British India, separate nationhood of the Muslims and the demand for a separate homeland. The most comprehensive articulation of the separate nationhood of the Muslims was done by Jinnah in his letter to Mahatma M.K. Gandhi on 17 September 1944. He wrote:

"We maintain and hold that Muslims and Hindus are two major nations by any definition or test of a nation. We are a nation of a hundred million, and what is more, we are a nation with our own distinctive culture and civilization, language and literature, art and architecture, names and nomenclature, sense of value and proportions, legal and moral codes, customs and calendar, history, and traditions, aptitudes, and ambitions – in short, we have our distinctive outlook on life and of life. By all canons of international law, we are a nation."

The Pakistan Resolution of March 1940 dealt with the Muslim question in the political context of British India of that time rather than offering a formula for power-sharing or provincial autonomy in post-independence Pakistan because no Muslim League leader could be certain about the establishment of Pakistan in 1940.

The March 1940 Resolution should also be viewed against the backdrop of various proposals of "Muslim homelands" in circulation in the

1930s. In addition to the ideas expressed by Allama Muhammad Iqbal (1930) and Chaudhry Rehmat Ali (1933) for a Muslim homeland, several other proposals surfaced in Muslim political circles that envisaged more than one Muslim homeland and also talked of its relationship with non-Muslim India. In order to stand up to the existing multiple proposals suggesting several Muslim homelands, the text of the Lahore Resolution (March 1940) was kept open-ended.

The next seven years (1940-47) were critical to fully developing the notion of separate homeland for the Muslims of British India. Two processes were noticeable in this period, which turned the notion of separate Muslim homeland into a reality in August 1947. First, the British government made political offers to Indian political leaders and held talks to evolve a broadly based agreement on the constitutional future of India. Some efforts were also made to bring the Congress Party and

the AIML closer to each other. Some important political measures in this period were the August 1940 British offer for constitutional changes; the Cripps Mission (1942), the Quit-India Movement by the Congress Party (1942), different efforts to bring the Congress Party and the AIML closer to each other, including the Jinnah-Gandhi talks and exchange of letters (1944); the Simla Conference (1945); and the Cabinet Mission Plan (1946). The AIML was active in these political affairs but it stood by its demand for a separate homeland for the Muslims of British India. Its consistency in its political demand strengthened the notion of a separate homeland.

Second, the notions about a separate Muslim nation and a separate homeland for them were initiated at the Muslim elite level. The AIML took these two inter-connected messages to the Muslim common people through a sustained public mobilization campaign during these seven years. The AIML's resounding success in the 1946 provincial

elections strengthened the democratic credentials of the political struggle for the establishment of Pakistan. It was during these years that the textual ambiguities in the Lahore Resolution were resolved by Jinnah and his colleagues. As early as 1941-42, the AIML leadership was clear in the demand for a single Pakistan homeland as an independent state. Quaid-i-Azam Jinnah expressed similar views in his letters to Mahatma Gandhi in 1944. The convention of the elected parliamentarians of the AIML, held in Delhi in April 1946, reiterated the demand for a separate homeland of Pakistan. The Resolution of March 23, 1940 is therefore a milestone in the political struggle for the making of Pakistan, whose roots go deep into history of the Sub-continent and the last seven years of the independence movement were critical to turning this Resolution into a concrete reality.

Courtesy - Business recorder





The leather and footwear sector discusses export opportunities and regulatory challenges with Federal Minister Jam Kamal Khan

A delegation representing Pakistan's leather and footwear industry called on Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan to discuss key issues affecting the sector, including export growth opportunities, domestic industry challenges, and regulatory concerns related to the import of used footwear.

During the meeting, the delegation highlighted the strong potential of Pakistan's footwear industry to expand exports and contribute more significantly to the country's export basket. Industry representatives noted that Pakistan possesses substantial manufacturing capacity and skilled labour, which can support increased production for both domestic consumption and international markets.

The delegation emphasised that Pakistan's annual footwear consumption is estimated at around 550 million pairs, while the country has an installed production capacity of nearly 700 million pairs annually, indicating significant potential for both domestic supply and export expansion.

However, they noted that a considerable portion of this capacity remains underutilized due to market distortions created by the growing influx of used footwear imports. Industry representatives informed

the Minister that approximately 30–40 percent of the domestic market is currently being met through imports of used footwear. Many of these imports, they explained, include branded shoes entering the market at extremely low declared values under the category of used clothing, which creates unfair competition for local manufacturers.



In this context, the delegation proposed the introduction of a separate Harmonized System (HS) code for used footwear, which is currently classified under the broader category of used clothing and accessories. They explained that the existing classification makes it difficult for regulators to properly track footwear imports, assess accurate valuation, and implement sector-specific regulatory measures.

During the discussion, the Joint Secretary (Tariff) of the Ministry of Commerce apprised the Minister that the proposal to create a separate HS code for used footwear has been placed on the agenda of the upcoming meeting of the Tariff Policy

Board. It was further shared that, following consultations and approvals, the proposal may ultimately become part of the upcoming federal budget.

Responding to the delegation's concerns, Federal Minister Jam Kamal Khan acknowledged the importance of the leather and footwear sector as a high-potential export industry and reiterated the government's commitment to supporting local manufacturing while promoting export-led growth.

The Minister encouraged industry stakeholders to enhance export performance and strengthen Pakistan's presence in international footwear markets, while also emphasizing the need for locally produced footwear to remain reasonably priced and accessible in the domestic market.

The meeting also discussed broader measures to improve customs valuation practices, address regulatory challenges associated with used imports, and encourage investment in export-oriented footwear manufacturing.

Both sides agreed to maintain close coordination between the government and industry stakeholders to fully unlock the sector's potential for employment generation, increased domestic production, and higher exports in the coming years.

7MFY26, Pakistan's leather export revenue remains flat

Pakistan's leather industry exports remained largely stagnant in the first seven months (July–January) of FY2025–2026. Total export revenue edged up slightly to \$542.56 million from \$542.03 million in the same period last year, reflecting minimal growth. Finished leather exports declined, falling to \$75.77 million

from \$79.24 million, marking a 4.37% year-on-year drop. In contrast, leather manufacturing exports—including garments and related products—remained nearly unchanged, reaching \$353.51 million compared to \$353.35 million previously.

Footwear exports provided the only notable growth within the sector. Earnings increased from \$109.43

million to \$113.26 million, showing a 3.51% rise over the same period last year. Overall, the data indicates a mixed performance: declines in finished leather, stability in manufactured goods, and moderate growth in footwear. Despite some positive movement, the sector's overall export performance remained flat, highlighting ongoing challenges in achieving significant growth in global markets.

PORTS, SHIPPING & RAILWAYS

Maritime Minister creates a committee to tackle Port Qasim water issues and outlines a maritime growth plan

Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chaudhry recently announced the formation of a committee to assess the water issues at Port Qasim.

The body comprising Port Qasim Authority board members and its officials will submit recommendations by the end of April, including a comprehensive 25-year sustainability plan with associated costs.

The minister made these remarks during a visit to Port Qasim, where officials briefed him on ongoing development projects, future investment plans, infrastructure upgrades,

industrial expansion, logistics improvements, and the textile city initiative. Expressing satisfaction with the progress, he stressed timely project completion to handle increased cargo volumes and modern shipping needs.

Junaid Chaudhry highlighted accelerated efforts for land reforms and new investment opportunities

around the port. Key initiatives include a multipurpose terminal to boost cargo handling and diversify capabilities, as well as the Eastern Industrial Zone to attract local and foreign investors.

He directed authorities to expedite critical projects like a treatment plant and dual carriageway, essential for operational efficiency and environmental management.

The minister also reviewed the "Sea to Steel" project, which will link maritime trade to industrial growth and reduce import dependence, alongside renewable energy proposals for wind and solar power to cut reliance on conventional sources.



Karachi Gateway Terminal launches a new feeder service between Pakistan and the UAE

Karachi Gateway Terminal (Private) Limited (KGTL) has announced it will be supported by a dedicated feeder service linking Karachi with the UAE ports of Fujairah and Khor Fakkan, strengthening maritime connectivity for Pakistan's trading community amid evolving regional shipping dynamics.

The new service establishes a regular shipping link between Karachi and two of the region's key transshipment hubs, enabling Pakistani importers and exporters to maintain reliable access to global container shipping networks.

The service will call at Karachi Gateway Terminal (Private) Limited (KGTL), part of AD Ports Group's international ports operating arm, Noatum Ports. The inaugural voyage arrived at KGTL on the evening of 11 March, officially marking the start of regular operations.

The new feeder link supports supply chain continuity through KGTL and helps ensure Pakistan's trade

markets.

Cargo routed through Fujairah and Khor Fakkan will benefit from seamless connectivity to regional and international shipping networks, supported by the UAE's advanced logistics infrastructure. Containers can be efficiently transferred via integrated road and rail corridors to major commercial hubs and logistics centres across the UAE.

Khurram Aziz Khan, Chief Executive Officer of Karachi Gateway Terminal (Private) Limited (KGTL), said:



maintains dependable access to international

"The commencement of this feeder service reflects KGTL's continued commitment to strengthening Pakistan's maritime connectivity and supporting the country's trading community. By linking Karachi directly with major UAE transshipment hubs, this service provides importers and exporters with reliable access to global shipping networks while reinforcing the role of Karachi Gateway Terminal as a key gateway for international trade."

Pakistan's economy relies heavily on maritime trade, and strengthened connectivity with regional transshipment hubs provides additional resilience for exporters, importers, and supply chains.

Rear Admiral Shahid Ahmed (Retd.), Chairman, Karachi Port Trust, said: "The introduction of this feeder service further enhances Karachi Port's connectivity with key regional hubs and supports Pakistan's growing trade requirements. Strengthening maritime links with the UAE will help facilitate smoother cargo movement while providing greater flexibility for the country's trading community."

KICT completes biometric registration of more than 15,000 truck drivers

Hutchison Ports KICT has completed the biometric registration of more than 15,000 truck drivers to enhance operational efficiency, safety and transparency across container handling operations, according to a statement issued recently.

The initiative was soft-launched on January 1, 2026, and following the successful onboarding of the trucking community, the system will officially go live on April 1, 2026. The biometric verification platform enables quick and reliable identification of truck drivers entering the terminal, allowing for smoother access management and more efficient coordination of container movements.

By integrating technology into gate operations, the system supports faster verification processes, reduces manual checks, and contributes to

a more streamlined flow of vehicles within the terminal.

With the introduction of the biometric verification system, pedestrian movement within operational areas has also been reduced by approximately 90 per cent to support a safer working environment for drivers, terminal staff, and equipment operators.

KICT has also introduced a reward and recognition program for registered drivers visiting the terminal, and more than 12,000 entries have already been received, with three motorbikes to be awarded through a lucky draw.

Navaid Qureshi, chief executive officer of KICT, said: "Technology plays a key role in improving the efficiency, safety, and reliability of modern port operations. The biometric verification system is an important step towards building a more transparent and well-coordinated logistics environment at KICT."

By digitising driver verification, we are enabling faster processes, improving operational visibility, and supporting a safer working environment for the trucking community and terminal staff."



Junaid Anwar Chaudhry calls KPT channel dredging a major boost to maritime infrastructure

Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chaudhry said that the dredging of the Karachi Port Trust (KPT) main channel by KGTL, which began recently, will mark a major upgrade to maritime infrastructure.



from international shipping.

"This initiative underscores the government's commitment to modernising port facilities and bolstering Pakistan's role in regional and global trade."

The minister, in a statement, highlighted that the work follows a formal agreement between KPT and KGTL to enhance navigational capacity and meet rising demands

Upon completion within three months, the project will enable KPT to accommodate vessels up to 350 meters in length with a gross registered tonnage (GRT) of 100,000,"

PNSC strengthens Gulf connectivity



Pakistan National Shipping Corporation (PNSC) is strengthening trade links between Pakistan and GCC countries through its Reliable Gulf Feeder Link, connecting Khorfakkan and Karachi with dependable, cost-effective service. Its latest schedule highlights punctual operations, with arrival at Khorfakkan on April 24 and Karachi on May 2. Priority berthing in Karachi improves efficiency by cutting cargo turnaround times.

PNSC's core strength remains its Fujairah-Karachi-Fujairah route, supported by conventional berth loading and tailored trade services. This feeder network enhances Pakistan's maritime presence and integration with GCC economies, supporting energy, industrial, and consumer goods trade.

As the national carrier, PNSC continues to expand regional connectivity, modernize operations, and promote sustainable shipping, while facilitating trade, strengthening partnerships, and contributing to economic growth.

the minister stated. "This will boost port efficiency by handling higher-capacity ships, reducing congestion, and shortening turnaround times," Junaid Chaudhry stated.

The dredging will deepen the upper and lower Harbour channels to 14 meters for safer navigation, while 14 berths will be deepened to 15.5 meters to support larger ships and expand cargo-handling capabilities.

The minister concluded that the project will drive higher trade volumes, slash shipping costs, streamline logistics, and fuel national economic growth.

Maritime Minister calls specialised vessel berthing at Gwadar Port a landmark success

Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chaudhry recently said that Gwadar Port is rapidly emerging as a secure and strategic maritime hub, as shifting regional dynamics prompt global shipping lines to seek safer alternatives to traditional Gulf routes.

Junaid Chaudhry's remarks came as the specialised vessel M/V HMO LEADER (IMO 9169811) successfully berthed at Gwadar Port, carrying 35 pieces of general transshipment cargo. "The development marks a significant operational milestone and reflects a growing trend of international maritime operators redirecting cargo flows towards Pakistan's southwestern coastline," the minister added.

Junaid Chaudhry noted that continued tensions in the region have

disrupted established shipping corridors, creating opportunities for Gwadar Port to position itself as a reliable and secure transit point. "Gwadar is increasingly being recognised for its strategic location and modern infrastructure, offering a safe haven for transshipment activities," he said.

He added that a rising number of international shipping lines are approaching the port to utilise its facilities for cargo storage and onward movement.

To facilitate this transition, port authorities are offering free storage for transshipment cargo, a move aimed at attracting greater



volumes and enhancing Gwadar's competitiveness in the region.

The minister highlighted that the port, along with its integrated free zone, currently has the capacity to handle up to 16,000 TEUs of containerised cargo, in addition to 90,000 square metres allocated for general cargo storage.

Junaid Chaudhry viewed the successful handling of the HMO LEADER as a practical demonstration of Gwadar's growing operational capabilities, noting "with a combination of financial incentives, expanding capacity and a comparatively stable environment, the port is steadily advancing towards becoming a key regional trade hub."

Junaid Chaudhry emphasised that Gwadar Port would play a central role in promoting Pakistan's blue economy, strengthening maritime trade and enhancing connectivity across regional and international markets.

Gwadar Port welcomed the MV Riva Glory, carrying 14,629 tonnes of cargo

Gwadar Port recently welcomed the MV Riva Glory, carrying 14,629 tonnes of cargo. Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs, Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chaudhry, highlighted the increasing commercial activity and confidence from global shipping

companies in Pakistan's ports.

He emphasised the strategic importance of Gwadar, stating that the government is focused on improving efficiency and facilities for investors. Chaudhry reaffirmed the commitment to develop Gwadar



into a world-class marine gateway, enhancing Pakistan's role in global trade.

Maritime reforms, port performance applauded at KCCI

Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chaudhry received strong appreciation at a meeting of the Karachi Chamber of Commerce and Industry, where business leaders lauded swift reforms, effective crisis management, and a long-term vision driving Pakistan's maritime sector.

The Minister highlighted proactive handling of recent regional disruptions, ensuring uninterrupted trade through coordinated efforts and intensive engagement. He underscored major reforms, including a 60% reduction in transshipment charges, new cargo

facilitation rules, improved connectivity projects, and investor-friendly policies to enhance port competitiveness.

Chairman, Karachi Port Trust, Rear Admiral Shahid Ahmed SI (M) S.Bt (Retd) stated that the sector's strong operational performance—particularly during recent regional challenges—reflects resilience, adding that efforts are now focused



on translating this momentum into economic gains. Key measures included feeder vessel support, demurrage relief, clearance of legacy cargo, and expansion of transit and bunkering operations.

President KCCI Rehan Hanif appreciated the government's reform agenda and operational efficiency across ports, urging further steps, including establishing a national shipping line, improving regulatory oversight, and resolving trade facilitation issues to sustain growth.

The meeting concluded with confidence that Pakistan's maritime sector is on a strong trajectory toward becoming a leading regional trade and transshipment hub.

Karachi Port plays a vital role in fostering economic growth

Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Junaid Anwar Chaudhry has reaffirmed the government's commitment to transforming Karachi Port into a modern and competitive regional trade hub.

He said the port's future is being reshaped through structural reforms, infrastructure upgrades, and improved facilitation for the business community, as part of a broader effort to strengthen Pakistan's role in regional maritime trade.

The minister highlighted progress in key operational areas, including large-scale dredging, enhanced transshipment systems, expansion of bunkering services, and terminal optimisation. These steps are aimed at improving efficiency, reducing turnaround times, and enabling the handling of larger vessels and higher cargo volumes.

A notable development is the growth in bunkering operations, with more than 100 vessels serviced in recent months. The shift toward direct marine fuel supply, particularly Very Low Sulphur Fuel Oil (VLSFO), is expected to support Pakistan's refining sector while attracting more international shipping lines.

In addition, Karachi Port is expanding maritime support services by facilitating crew changes and providing affordable medical services for merchant mariners, strengthening its standing as a service-oriented hub.

Supporting the minister's vision, Shahid Ahmed, Chairman of Karachi Port Trust, outlined practical measures underway. Four dredgers are currently active, with two focused on deepening the approach channel to improve navigation and accommodate larger ships. Progress has also been made in the SAPTL channel-deepening project, valued at around \$6 million, while the National Dredging and Marine Services continues broader dredging work.

He also acknowledged the support of the Port Qasim Authority in facilitating additional resources for Karachi Port's development. Over the past 40 days, Pakistan has achieved significant progress in cargo transshipment through a high-level committee working with the business community, resolving most operational and procedural challenges.

Following disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz, Karachi Port successfully handled a major transshipment,

sending a strong signal to global markets. Alongside Port Qasim and Gwadar Port, it is emerging as a key regional gateway.

To boost trade, transshipment charges have been reduced by up to 60%, a new feeder service has been launched, and additional vessels are being arranged to ease congestion. The port has maintained 24/7 operations, achieving strong cargo handling performance even during holidays. Expanded storage areas and off-dock facilities have further improved efficiency.

Support from Federal Board of Revenue and Pakistan Customs, including expedited regulatory changes, has accelerated reforms. Clearance of long-pending scrap materials for auction is also creating additional space for cargo operations.

Further approvals for RoRo, bulk, and breakbulk cargo transshipment, along with clearance of previously restricted goods, are expected to unlock new commercial opportunities.

Overall, these initiatives are set to strengthen Karachi Port's position as a leading regional maritime hub and a key driver of Pakistan's economic growth.

DP World boosts capacity at Jeddah terminal

DP World has expanded capacity at its South Container Terminal in Jeddah Islamic Port with the addition of three semi-automated quay cranes, strengthening Saudi Arabia's position as a key Red Sea logistics gateway at a time when global shipping routes are being reshaped by disruptions around the Strait of Hormuz.

The Dubai-based global ports operator said the new cranes — each with a lifting capacity of 65 tonnes — will significantly enhance berth productivity and allow the terminal to handle multiple ultra-large container vessels simultaneously. The move comes as shipping lines



increasingly look to diversify trade corridors amid heightened security concerns in Gulf waters and periodic constraints on traffic through Hormuz, the world's most critical oil and container transit chokepoint.

"By expanding capacity and enhancing operational agility, we are helping our customers move goods more efficiently and strengthening the

terminal's ability to accommodate larger vessels and growing container volumes," said Mohammad Alshaikh, CEO of DP World Saudi Arabia. "While recent regional developments have brought new challenges, we are working closely with port authorities, security partners and shipping customers to ensure safe, reliable operations to keep trade moving across the Red Sea and beyond."

The expansion forms part of DP World's \$800 million modernisation programme that has lifted terminal capacity from 1.8 million to 4 million TEUS annually, with a roadmap to reach 5 million TEUS as demand accelerates under Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 logistics strategy.



CEMENT INDUSTRY

Pakistan saw a 6.56% increase in cement exports in March

Pakistan's cement dispatches showed a slight increase in March 2026, with total dispatches reaching 3.745Mt, up from 3.712Mt in the same month of the last fiscal year, an increase of 0.91 per cent. According to data released by the All Pakistan Cement Manufacturers Association (APCMA), the industry's local cement despatches in March 2026 were 3.097Mt, down from 3.103Mt in March 2025, a decline of 0.20 per cent. Exports dispatched, however, increased by 6.56 per cent, as volumes jumped from 608,614t in March 2025 to 648,564t in March 2026.

In March 2026, northern cement mills dispatched 2.639Mt, up 3.07 per cent from 2.561Mt in March 2025. Southern mills dispatched 1.11Mt of cement during Mar-26, which was 3.89 per cent lower than the dispatches of 1.151Mt during March 2025. Northern cement mills dispatched 2.639Mt in domestic markets in March 2026, showing an increase of 3.82 per cent against 2.542Mt dispatched in Mar-25. Southern mills dispatched 457,583t of cement in local markets during Mar-26, which was 18.40 per cent less compared to the dispatches of 560,797t during March 2025. There were no exports from northern mills during Mar-26. Exports from

the south increased by 9.91 per cent to 648,564t in March 2026 from 590,106t during the same month last year.

Cumulative dispatches

During 9MFY26, total cement dispatches (domestic and exports) were 38.54Mt, 9.80 per cent higher than the 35.1Mt dispatched during the corresponding period of the last fiscal year. Domestic dispatches during this period were 31.6Mt, up from 28.56Mt during the same period last year, an increase of 10.61 per cent. Export dispatches were also 6.25 per cent higher, as volumes rose to 6.94Mt during the first nine months of the current fiscal year, compared to 6.53Mt exported during the same period of the last fiscal year.

Northern mills dispatched 26.384Mt of cement domestically during the first nine months of the current fiscal year, an increase of 12.14 per cent over the 23.527Mt dispatched during July 2024 to March 2025. Exports from the north declined by 28.54 per cent to 800,360t during July 25 to March 2026 compared with 1.12Mt exported during the same period last year. Total dispatches by northern mills increased by 10.29 per cent to 27.184 Mt during the first nine months of the current financial year from 24.647Mt during the same period of the last financial year. Domestic dispatches by southern mills from July 2025 to March 2026 were

5.216Mt, an increase of 3.47 per cent over the 5.041Mt dispatched during the same period of the last fiscal year. Exports from the south increased by 13.45 per cent to 6.1Mt during July 2025 to March 2026 compared with 5.412Mt exported during the same period last year. Total dispatches by south-based mills increased by 8.64 per cent to 11.356Mt during the first nine months of the current financial year from 10.453Mt during the same period of the last financial year.

A spokesman for the APCMA said that the current geopolitical tensions pose serious threats to the manufacturing sector. Cement is an energy-intensive industry, and the current volatility in oil and coal prices will have a serious effect due to cost escalations and supply chain disruptions. He applauded Pakistan's role as a peacemaker to ease global tensions in the greater interest of all stakeholders.

Additionally, Usama Rauf of AKD Research has stated that annual growth in cement offtake is driven by continued expansion in exports to South, supported by market diversification. Additionally, North domestic dispatches increased with the revival of local construction activity amid easing interest rates and lower construction material prices. Meanwhile, the MoM decline in dispatches is primarily due to Ramadan and Eid holidays.

DG Khan Cement reports strong half-year performance ending December 2025

DG Khan Cement Co Ltd has reported a strong financial and operational performance for the half-year ending 31 December 2025, marked by a rise in profits and a significant strategic pivot toward diversification. The company recorded sales of PKR40.6bn (US\$145.5m), representing a nearly 10 per cent increase over the

previous year.

This growth was supported by enhanced plant performance, with clinker production efficiency rising to 73 per cent and sales utilisation reaching 85 per cent, which significantly outperformed the broader industry trend.



Improved cost management and a lower interest rate environment helped boost

gross margins to 26.9 per cent, resulting in a profit after tax of PKR 5.85bn and earnings per share of PKR13.36. Beyond its financial results, the company is moving forward with major expansion and diversification plans.

It has commenced work on a new 11,000 tonnes per day brownfield clinker line at its DG Khan site, which is expected to be the largest single-line facility in Pakistan once operational in 18 months.

Bestway Cement retained its position as the largest cement producer in 1HFY26

The Board of Directors of Bestway Cement Ltd published its report recently, together with the unaudited financial statements for the half-year ended 31 December 2025. The company's total cement dispatches increased by 8.5 per cent, lower than the industry's 10.8 per cent increase. Despite fierce competition, Bestway successfully retained its position as the largest cement producer and the country's market leader.

The company recorded gross turnover of PKR87.3bn (US\$31.2m) in the half year ended 31 December 2025, two per cent higher than PKR85.6bn in the same period last year. Net turnover for the half-year marginally decreased from PKR55.6bn to PKR55.4bn. Higher volumes largely offset the impact of lower selling prices due to intense competition.

Gross profit for the half year

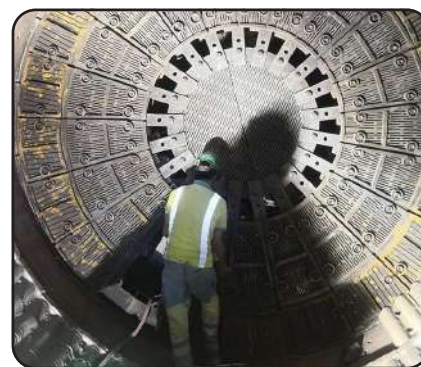
was reported at PKR15.6bn, compared with PKR20.4bn for the

same period last year. Financial charges decreased to PKR2.6bn for the period, compared with PKR4.6bn for the same period last year, due to lower interest rates and reduced borrowings.

Profit before tax amounted to PKR16.9bn, compared with PKR17.8bn for the half year ended 31 December 2024. Profit after taxation for the period amounted to PKR11.1bn, compared with PKR11.5bn for the same period last year.

Future outlook

The outlook for the cement industry remains optimistic, supported by the economic stabilisation. Declining interest rates, easing inflation, and improved business sentiment will help revive construction activity and enable further growth in cement dispatches. Despite improving



volumes, the industry continues to face cost and pricing pressures. Unreasonably high taxes, duties, royalties, and fuel and power costs will continue to weigh on the industry, as cement manufacturers find it difficult to pass on cost increases, potentially impacting profit margins in the future.

Border closures with Afghanistan have completely halted the exports of cement from the North, and this situation is likely to persist until a long-term solution is agreed upon.

Courtesy - CemNet

The Pakistan cement industry has a US\$5bn market cap in FY26

Pakistan's listed cement sector continues to demonstrate steady growth and attractive valuations, according to a recent comparative analysis of major producers by Topline Pakistan Research.

The industry, with a combined market capitalisation of nearly US\$5bn (US\$17.88m) and total production capacity of over 85Mt, has recorded a three-year sales compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 16 per cent and a profit CAGR of 35 per cent, reflecting improved margins and operational efficiency across the sector.

Among the leading companies, Bestway Cement Ltd and Lucky Cement Ltd remain dominant players, with market shares of approximately 17.7 per cent and 16.3 per cent, respectively. Fauji Cement Co Ltd follows with a projected market share of around 13.2 per cent. Together, these three companies account

for nearly half of the industry's cement sales, highlighting the sector's concentration among large producers.

Growth performance varies across companies. Thatta Cement Co Ltd and Flying Cement Co Ltd posted the strongest three-year sales growth rates at around 29 per cent and 28 per cent, respectively, while Power Cement Ltd recorded the highest long-term sales expansion with a 10-year CAGR of about 23 per cent.

Profit growth has also been robust for several firms. Pioneer Cement Ltd reported the fastest three-year profit growth at roughly 67 per cent, followed by DG Khan Cement Co Ltd

and Lucky Cement Ltd, which posted profit CAGRs of about 43 per cent and 38 per cent, respectively.

Despite the strong growth trends, valuation multiples across the sector remain relatively low. Companies such as Maple Leaf Cement Factory Ltd and Lucky Cement Ltd trade at price-to-earnings ratios below 5x based on FY25 estimates, compared with the sector average of around 5.9x. Analysts say these subdued valuations may reflect macroeconomic pressures but could also signal potential value opportunities for investors.

Industry observers note that cement demand remains closely linked to infrastructure development, construction activity, and energy costs. While challenges such as rising fuel prices and economic uncertainty persist, the sector's strong capacity base and improving profitability position it for gradual expansion in the coming years.

Courtesy - CemNet



Kohat Cement greenfield project in Khushab is underway

During 1HFY26, the Kohat Cement Co Ltd's dispatches increased by 15.4 per cent, which was greater than the industry average. The growth was driven by an 11.2 per cent rise in domestic dispatches and a significant 319.9 per cent increase in exports.

Similarly, in 2QFY26, dispatches grew by 12.2 per cent, supported by a 9.8 per cent increase in domestic sales and a 332.8 per cent surge in



exports. Export sales recorded a comparative increase during the period; however, trade activity was impacted by the closure of the Afghanistan-Pakistan border since October of this year, according to the company's detailed report issued recently.

Net sales rose modestly by 0.4 per cent YoY, reaching PKR20,744m, driven primarily by higher dispatches supported by domestic demand. Nevertheless, industry-wide price rationalisation and intensified competition limited the impact of volume growth on overall revenue. The company is in full compliance with all debt obligations.

Greenfield cement plant

The company is establishing a greenfield cement production line in Khushab, Punjab. The infrastructure

development for the project is currently underway. The import of plant and machinery will be finalised upon a favourable improvement in the construction sector.

Solar power

During the quarter, the company successfully installed and energised an additional 2.32MW of on-grid solar power at its plant site in Kohat. With this addition, the company's total installed on-grid solar power generation capacity has increased from 15.34MW to 17.66MW.

Coal-fired power plant

The construction and installation of a 28.5 MW coal-fired power plant at the company's Kohat facility is progressing as scheduled and is expected to become operational by the end of the current financial year.

Maple Leaf Cement completes purchase of Pioneer Cement Ltd

Maple Leaf Cement Factory Ltd and one of Pakistan's largest banks, Habib Bank, have jointly announced in a public statement that HBL is leading Maple Leaf Cement Factory's PKR75bn (US\$268.3bn) acquisition of Pioneer Cement Ltd.

In summary, it states that, as part of a significant consolidation in Pakistan's industrial sector, Maple Leaf Cement Factory Ltd has successfully completed the acquisition of Pioneer Cement Ltd in a landmark deal valued at PKR75bn.

Additionally, as the exclusive buy-side financial advisor and lead

arranger, HBL played a key role in structuring the transaction through a large Shariah-compliant Islamic Syndicated Musharakah facility.

This strategic move, which follows a public offer concluded in February 2026, allows the Kohinoor Maple Leaf Group to secure a dominant 88.28 per cent stake in Pioneer Cement, effectively elevating the combined entity to the position of the third-largest cement producer in the country.

With a total production capacity now exceeding 13.4Mta and a market share of approximately 15.5 per cent,



the acquisition is expected to drive significant operational synergies and cost efficiencies across the northern region's construction supply chain.

This transaction shows a growing appetite for large-scale mergers in the manufacturing sector and highlights Islamic finance's ability to support mega-scale corporate acquisitions in Pakistan's evolving economy.

According to APCMA, Maple Leaf Cement Factory Ltd at Daudkhel in Punjab has a capacity of 8.19Mt, and Pioneer Cement Ltd - Khushab in Punjab has a capacity of 5.45Mt of cement.

Pioneer Cement shows steady growth in 1HFY26

Pioneer Cement Ltd reported steady growth in the first half of FY2025-26, ending December 31, 2025. Net sales increased 11.24% to PKR18.68 billion, supported by improved pricing and a better sales mix.

Despite a sharp 22.98% rise in production costs due to inflation and higher energy tariffs, profitability remained resilient. Operationally,

the company performed strongly, with cement production rising 20.04% to 1.24 million tonnes and sales volumes increasing 23.58%.

Financial management also improved significantly, as finance costs dropped to PKR393 million from PKR840 million a year earlier, reflecting successful deleveraging. As a result, profit after tax rose to PKR2.87 billion, with earnings per



share reaching PKR12.65.

Meanwhile, Maple Leaf Cement Factory Ltd is set to acquire a controlling stake, agreeing to purchase about 58.03% of shares and launching a public offer for an additional 11.72%.

Looking ahead, demand is expected to remain supported by easing monetary policy and infrastructure projects, despite cost pressures.

Power Cement saw great improvement in financial performance 1HFY26

The Board of Directors of Power Cement Ltd has presented a detailed financial report, including a review of the company's financial and operational performance for the half year ended 31 December 2025.

The company believes that Pakistan's cement industry showed early signs of recovery in the first half of FY25-26, with domestic dispatches increasing by 13.11 per cent after three years of contraction, supported by higher public-sector development activity and improving private-sector sentiment. This recovery was partially offset by a 3.73 per cent decline in exports, largely due to regional and geopolitical constraints. Looking ahead, cement demand is expected to grow moderately, supported by higher development spending and housing incentives.

During the half-year ended 31 December 2025, the

company delivered a great improvement in financial performance compared to the corresponding period last year, reflecting higher dispatch volumes, improved margins, and lower finance costs. Net sales revenue increased by 19 per cent to PKR16.46bn (US\$58.8m) from PKR13.82bn. This growth, combined with effective cost management, led to a significant improvement in profitability.

Net finance costs declined substantially by 48 per cent to PKR0.98bn primarily due to lower interest rates, reduced borrowings, and improved financial management. Profit after taxation and levy improved significantly to

PKR1661m, up from PKR32m in the corresponding period last year. The company recorded cement production of 884,626t in the half year ended 31 December 2025, up from 794,920t, representing growth of 11.28 per cent during the accounting period.

Future outlook

The company's strong performance underpins a positive outlook. The cement industry is expected to benefit from higher infrastructure spending, improved private-sector construction activity, and easing financing conditions. While energy costs remain elevated, efficiency measures and lower finance costs are expected to provide relief.

In addition, the company's 7.5MW wind energy project, being implemented under a rental model similar to the solar project, is progressing as planned and is expected to become operational in the last quarter of FY25-26, further supporting cost optimisation and sustainability objectives.



Fauji Cement's export sales drop 9% in 1HFY26 due to the Afghan border closure

Fauji Cement Co Ltd has published a comprehensive financial report for the period ending in the first half of FY26. The company earned a net revenue of PKR47,353m (US\$169.2m), compared to PKR47,844m in the same period last year.

The decrease in revenue is mainly due to lower cement prices and reduced export sales volumes. The company earned a profit after tax (PAT) of PKR7317m, compared to PKR7267m in the same period last year, representing a 1 per cent increase (YoY), with a net profit margin of 15 per cent.

The company's dispatches in the first half of FY26 were 2.98 Mt, compared to 2.81Mt in the same period

last year; local sales increased by eight per cent (YoY), while export sales declined by nine per cent due to the Afghan border closure. Total sales reached 2.98Mt, a six per cent increase YoY. The gross profit margin remained at 33 per cent, compared to 35 per cent in the same period last year.

Despite rising local coal prices due

to the border closure, the company managed to control costs (a two per cent increase over the same period last year) by enhancing its power generation capacity, utilising various alternative fuels, meeting nearly 100 per cent of packing bag requirements through self-production, and optimising fixed costs.

Future outlook

Local dispatches are expected to stay stable over the next six months. Exports depend on the border situation, as Afghanistan remains the company's sole viable market due to the high logistics costs of sea shipping.

Lower interest rates should help reduce financial charges. Management will continue its efforts to optimise costs to achieve the best possible results.



PEOPLE & EVENTS

Nehal Hashmi sworn in as 35th governor of Sindh

Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz senior leader Nehal Hashmi was sworn in as the 35th governor of Sindh during a ceremony at the Governor House, Karachi, recently. The oath of office was administered by Justice Zafar Ahmed Rajput, chief justice of the Sindh High Court. Born in Karachi on January 28, 1960, Hashmi is a prominent lawyer and a seasoned politician. He began practising law in the late 1980s and earlier founded a political organisation called the All Pakistan Youth League during his student years.



He formally joined the Pakistan Muslim League-N in 1992 and served as adviser on law, justice and human rights to Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif from 1997 to 1999.

KE appoints Syed Taha as New CEO

K-Electric Limited (KE) has appointed Syed Taha as its new Chief Executive Officer, effective April 15, 2026, the company announced through a notification to the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX). He previously held the position of Chief Distribution Officer at K-Electric and has been serving as Managing Director and CEO of Pakistan State Oil (PSO) since February 2020.

Taha holds an Engineering degree and an MBA in Finance from the Institute of Business Administration (IBA), Karachi.



Sarmad elected APNS President, Shahab Zuberi VP at state of print media

The Annual Meeting of the APNS General Council held on March 31, 2026 at APNS House, Karachi unanimously re-elected Senator Sarmad Ali as President, Nazafreen Saigol Lakhani as Senior Vice President, Shahab Zuberi as Vice President, Muhammad Athar Kazi as Secretary General, Mohsin Bilal as Joint Secretary and Naveed Kashif as Finance Secretary of the Society.

The members, in the AGM, requested the federal and provincial governments to pay the long outstanding dues of newspaper



industry, increase the quantum of advertisements and allocate a separate share of print media in the advertising budget so that the newspaper industry would be able to survive in the present situation.

The newly elected Executive Committee appreciated the performance of the Election Commission for conducting the elections.

Farid Tarar appointed CCP chief

The federal government has appointed Farid Ahmad Tarar as the Chairman, Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP).

He brings over three decades of experience in public financial management, regulatory reform, and economic governance.

He holds a Master's degree in Accounting and Finance from Manchester Business School, University of Manchester (UK), and MBA (Finance).

He has also authored key policy documents for international development partners, including the Sindh Public Financial Management Reform Strategy and the Sindh Tax Revenue Mobilisation Plan.



HBFC appoints Syed Muhammad Talib Rizvi as MD & CEO

The Board of Directors of House Building Finance Company Limited (HBFC), following receipt of requisite regulatory clearances, is pleased to announce the appointment of Syed Muhammad Talib Rizvi as the Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of the Company.

Rizvi brings over 28 years of distinguished strategic leadership experience spanning commercial banking, digital finance, fintech, public policy, and regulatory affairs. Established in 1952 under the sponsorship of the Government of Pakistan, HBFC is one of the country's oldest housing finance institutions, playing a pivotal role in enabling homeownership. The Company holds long-term and short-term credit ratings of AAA and A-1+, respectively, with a stable outlook, and reported a profit before tax of PKR 3.16 billion for the year ended December 31, 2025.





OIL AND GAS

OGDC commences oil production from Pasakhi-13

Oil and Gas Development Company Limited (OGDC) announced the successful commencement of oil production from its development well Pasakhi-13, marking a historic milestone as Pakistan's first successful horizontal oil well in a clastic reservoir (Lower Goru – A Sand).

Located in the Hyderabad district of Sindh province, Pasakhi-13 is

currently producing 460 barrels of oil per day (BPD). The well was drilled to a measured depth of 2,966 meters, including a 546-meter horizontal section. Advanced geosteering technology enabled precise navigation within a narrow three-meter drilling window, ensuring optimal placement within the reservoir's sweet spot.

Pasakhi-13 is part of the Pasakhi & Pasakhi North Development & Production Lease (D&PL), where OGDC holds 100% working interest.



This achievement reinforces OGDC's commitment to innovation, technical excellence, and the deployment of advanced technologies aligned with global standards.

OGDC announces successful appraisal of Hydrocarbons in TAL Block, Kohat, KP

Oil and Gas Development Company Limited (OGDC), along with its joint venture partners in the TAL Block, has successfully appraised the existing discovered gas and condensate (in traces) from Lumshiwal Formation in the Bilitang-1- ST-1 Exploratory well, located in Kohat district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The TAL Joint Venture comprises OGDC with

a 30% working interest, MOL Pakistan Oil & Gas Co. B.V. as the Operator with 10%, Pakistan Petroleum Limited (PPL) with 30%, Pakistan Oilfields Limited (POL) with 25%, and Government Holdings Private Limited (GHPL) with 5%.

This appraisal of the existing discovery has de-risked further exploration prospects in the TAL

Block, leading to new upside opportunities.

The discovery is also expected to contribute to strengthening Pakistan's energy security through indigenous resources, while adding to the hydrocarbon reserves base of the joint venture partners and the country.



Production from Spinwam-1 well in Waziristan commences

The Waziristan Joint Venture (WJV), operated by Mari Energies Limited, has commenced production from the Spinwam-1 exploratory well in Waziristan, marking an important step in strengthening Pakistan's domestic energy supply.

The joint venture comprises Mari Energies (55%), Oil and Gas Development Company Limited (35%), and Orient Petroleum Inc (10%), reflecting effective collaboration among key local exploration firms.

At the inauguration ceremony, Federal Minister for Petroleum Ali Pervaiz Malik praised the JV's technical expertise and operational performance. He noted that discoveries like Spinwam-1 are vital for enhancing

energy security, reducing reliance on imported fuels, and supporting sustainable economic growth.

The minister also paid tribute to the sacrifices of law enforcement agencies, E&P companies, and Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited teams, acknowledging their role in enabling operations under challenging security conditions.

Faheem Haider, Managing Director and CEO of Mari Energies, said

the project demonstrates a strong commitment to developing indigenous hydrocarbon resources and meeting the country's growing energy demand through reliable gas supply.

Spinwam-1 is the second successful discovery in the block after Shewa-1 and represents a major milestone for the WJV. Initial production stands at 40 million standard cubic feet per day (MMSCFD) of gas and 200 barrels per day of condensate. This increases total output from the Waziristan Block to around 100 MMSCFD of gas and approximately 800 barrels per day of condensate for the national grid.

Production has been supported by a newly completed pipeline linking the discoveries to the gas network, with further exploration expected to unlock additional potential.



FERTILIZER & PETROCHEMICAL INDUSTRY

FFC holds first Corporate Briefing for FY26

Fauji Fertilizer Company (FFC) successfully conducted its first Corporate Briefing for the year 2026, reaffirming its strong commitment to transparency, investor engagement and adherence to best practices in corporate governance.

Brigadier Khurram Shahzada, SI(M) (retd), Company Secretary, opened the session by highlighting the significance of the corporate briefing as a key platform for fostering transparency, strengthening investor confidence and promoting informed decision-making among



stakeholders.

Chief Financial Officer, Syed Atif Ali, delivered a comprehensive presentation on the Company's

financial performance for FY2025, highlighting key achievements, operational efficiencies and resilience amid evolving market dynamics. He also provided insights into major financial indicators, strategic priorities and the Company's forward outlook.

Jahangir Piracha, Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer, graced the occasion and actively participated in an interactive question-and-answer session. Alongside the CFO, he addressed queries and observations raised by participants, reflecting the Company's open and responsive approach to stakeholder engagement.

Fertiliser makers partner with Mari Energies



Fauji Fertiliser Company Limited (FFC), in collaboration with Engro Fertilisers Limited and Fatima Fertiliser Company Limited, has executed key project agreements with Mari Energies Limited for the development of Pressure Enhancement Facilities (PEF) at the Mari gas field in Daharki, Sindh.

The PEF project is aimed at addressing technical constraints within the gas gathering network by de-bottleneck existing pipelines, installing advanced compression facilities at various junctions and ensuring continued operation and maintenance of the upgraded



infrastructure.

Mari Energies, which holds a 100 percent working interest and operates the Mari gas field, will oversee the project's execution.

The field's Habib Rahi Limestone (HRL) reservoir, one of Pakistan's key gas sources for the fertiliser sector, has been experiencing natural pressure decline as the reservoir matures.

Through the installation of pressure enhancement facilities, the project seeks to maintain the minimum delivery pressure required for sustained gas flow from the HRL reservoir, thereby extending the production plateau of the field and ensuring uninterrupted supply to fertilizer plants.

FFC's Company Secretary, Brig Khurram Shahzada (retd) described the project as a strategic initiative that would directly support domestic fertiliser output and contribute to national food security by ensuring consistent availability of locally produced urea for the agriculture sector.

Sharif Group partners Brazil's CTC to boost sugarcane yields



Sharif Group has signed a memorandum of understanding with Brazil's Centro de Tecnologia Canavieira (CTC) to introduce advanced sugarcane technologies to Pakistan, the company said recently.

The partnership will focus on field trials of high-yield and disease-resistant sugarcane varieties, alongside the development of local research infrastructure and diagnostic tools for crop management.

CTC, a global leader in sugarcane biotechnology and breeding, will also support technical training and knowledge transfer under the agreement.

TELECOMMUNICATION NEWS

Zong 5G is Live; Leading Pakistan's digital journey!

Zong, Pakistan's leading technology service enterprise, has launched its 5G services commercially in over 16 cities, including Islamabad, Karachi, and Lahore.

This marks a significant step in Pakistan's digital evolution, with Zong planning to deploy over 1,000 5G sites nationwide in 2026 to enhance connectivity and innovation.

From initiating 5G trials in 2019 to today's robust 5G infrastructure, Zong aims to lead Pakistan's transition to a fully connected digital future. Trials have demonstrated speeds exceeding 1.4Gbps, showcasing

Zong's commitment to technological excellence.

Zong's 5G strategy concentrates on three key areas: delivering an exceptional customer experience with low latency and high reliability; a diverse portfolio of products and services that extends beyond connectivity, including cloud solutions and IoT; and AI capabilities for predictive optimisation and personalised user experiences.

As a subsidiary of China Mobile Limited, Zong brings global expertise to support national growth priorities and aligns with the Government's



Digital Pakistan vision. This 5G rollout positions Pakistan as a global technology hub, fostering advancements in healthcare and agriculture.

Zong is not merely launching a network; it's paving the way for a truly Digital Pakistan. The era of 5G is live with Zong 5G – Aisa hai future!

PTCL partners with Indus Cloud to deliver Huawei Cloud Stack in Pakistan

Pakistan Telecommunication Company Limited (PTCL) has partnered with Indus Cloud to provide advanced cloud solutions powered by Huawei Cloud in Pakistan.

This collaboration aims to enhance PTCL's cloud and data centre offerings, making enterprise-grade digital infrastructure more accessible.

The agreement was signed by key officials from both companies,

including Asif Ahmad from PTCL and Rumman Arshad Dar from

Indus Cloud.

Asif Ahmad stated that the partnership is essential as organisations in Pakistan accelerate their digital transformation and need a secure, scalable cloud infrastructure.

Rumman Arshad Dar emphasised PTCL's extensive reach as a foundation for providing

compliant cloud solutions.

This partnership further enriches PTCL's cloud services and aims to bolster local access to enterprise-level cloud infrastructure.



JazzWorld, VEON pledge \$1bn to drive 5G rollout

JazzWorld and VEON Group leadership called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif reiterating a \$1 billion investment commitment over three years to spearhead 5G rollout and expand digital infrastructure across Pakistan, said a statement recently.

JazzWorld CEO Aamir Ibrahim and VEON Group CEO Kaan Terzioğlu led the delegation, which discussed

Pakistan's digital transformation, financial inclusion and next-generation connectivity with the prime minister.

Sharif welcomed the investment and acknowledged JazzCash's role in advancing the government's cashless economy drive. JazzCash has become the first financial services provider to onboard one million Raast QR merchants and now hosts 24 million of the country's 48 million Raast IDs. Ibrahim said Pakistan was entering a

new phase of digital growth and that collaboration between government and industry would be key to unlocking its potential.

Terzioğlu highlighted VEON's 'Invest in Pakistan NOW' initiative, announced earlier this year, which aims to draw international investors into the digital sector. Discussions also covered broadband expansion, digital payments adoption and the use of emerging technologies to drive economic inclusion.

BANKING & INSURANCE

Easypaisa digital bank, RUDA partner to drive financial inclusion in rural communities

The Ravi Urban Development Authority (RUDA) and easypaisa digital bank have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to enhance digital financial inclusion in 93 villages under RUDA's jurisdiction.

The ceremony at RUDA's Head Office in Lahore saw Shahzad Khan, Chief Business Officer of easypaisa, and Brig. (Retd.) Bakhtiar Akram, Executive Director of RUDA, formalize the partnership aimed at improving access to branchless banking for

This collaboration supports the Prime Minister's Cashless Pakistan Scheme, striving to establish Ravi City as a fully cashless urban center. By embedding digital financial solutions, the partnership seeks to enhance transparency, convenience, and economic efficiency. Khan

residents and small businesses.

emphasized easypaisa's commitment to fostering a financially inclusive economy, while Akram highlighted the transformative potential of technology in economic modernity.

Fatima Ali Khan of RUDA noted the importance of financial inclusion for economic empowerment, and Syed Moazzam Ali discussed plans to make local shopkeepers digital hubs, extending benefits to community development initiatives.

Easypaisa continues to lead with over 59 million registered users, aligned with the State Bank of Pakistan's goal of inclusive economic growth.



Mashreq Global Network Pakistan Launches New Offshore Centres in Karachi and Lahore

Mashreq, a prominent international financial institution, has launched new Mashreq Global Network (MGN) Offshore Centres in Karachi and Lahore, reflecting its commitment to Pakistan's talent and digital banking. Over USD 40 million has been invested to support MGN Pakistan's growth.

The centres aim to broaden opportunities for skilled professionals and enhance the Group's distributed workforce model by drawing talent from over 30 cities and hiring on merit. MGN Pakistan has doubled its workforce over three years to more than 520 employees, with plans for further expansion. Mark Edwards, Group Head of Operations, highlighted the

Pakistan's digital talent pool while promoting operational excellence. MGN Pakistan emphasises upskilling, career mobility, and gender inclusion, with women making up 35% of the workforce, a high ratio in the financial sector.

Muhammad Hamayun Sajjad, CEO of Mashreq Pakistan, noted the long-term investment in the country's potential. MGN Pakistan supports the growing demand for digital financial services, providing employment pathways and enhancing operational resilience.

Faisal Muqeet, Head of MGN Pakistan, stressed the importance of merit and diversity in building a strong Offshore Centre. The workplace has received recognition for its culture and gender inclusion, contributing to Mashreq's broader efforts in Pakistan, including the launch of its digital retail bank and initiatives for financial inclusion and digital adoption.

importance of these centres in accessing

JazzCash CEO Murtaza Ali named to jury of The Money Awards



Murtaza Ali, Chief Executive Officer of JazzCash, Pakistan's leading digital financial services platform and part of VEON Ltd, has been appointed to the Global Jury of The Money Awards by Money20/20, where he will evaluate entries in the banking category.

At the inaugural 2025 Money Awards, JazzCash won a Silver award for Readycash: Shaping the Future of Credit in Pakistan.

Murtaza now joins the jury that will assess the next generation of entries, becoming the first Pakistani to serve in this capacity since the programme launched.



NBP Conducts Merchant Sales Conference in Lahore

National Bank of Pakistan (NBP) conducted its 2nd Merchant Sales Conference in Lahore as part of its continued efforts to expand digital payments adoption and strengthen Pakistan's cashless payments ecosystem.

The conference was hosted by Golootlo, NBP's debit card alliance partner, and brought together senior leadership from NBP, global payment schemes, fintech partners, and key stakeholders from Retail and Islamic Banking.

The conference commenced with a keynote address by Mr. Rehmat Ali Hasnie, President & CEO, National Bank of Pakistan, who outlined the Bank's strategic vision for scaling digital payments, expanding merchant acceptance across urban and semi-urban markets, and positioning NBP as a leading driver of

inclusive, secure, and interoperable digital payments nationwide.

This was followed by a thought-provoking fire-side chat led by Mr. Adnan Nasir, SEVP / Chief Digital Officer, NBP, who shared insights into the Bank's digital transformation journey and the evolving role of debit cards and the mobile app within NBP's broader digital and financial inclusion agenda.

The session featured Mr. Fouad Farrukh, SEVP / Group Chief Islamic Banking Group, and Mr. Syed Mujtaba Abbas, SEVP / Group Chief Retail Banking Group, who highlighted the contribution of their respective business segments in driving transaction growth, merchant enablement, and customer adoption

of digital payment channels. A key segment of the conference was a panel discussion on accelerating cashless transactions, chaired by the Head of Cards.

The panel brought together leaders from global payment schemes, fintech companies, and the bank's business divisions. The discussion focused on collaboration between payment schemes, merchant incentives, practical strategies to increase debit and digital transactions, and the rapidly evolving payments landscape.

The conference also featured a second panel discussion dedicated to merchant acquiring and acceptance infrastructure, chaired by the Division Head of the Digital Banking Group. Panelists shared perspectives on acquiring models, technology enablement, and the role of fintech partnerships in expanding merchant acceptance and improving transaction efficiency.



Veon CEO lauds Mobilink Bank's 35% green energy transition

Mobilink Bank is pioneering sustainable banking in Pakistan, focusing on an ESG-led transformation to become a responsible, future-ready financial institution. With over one-third of its branch network powered by renewable energy, the Bank is leading the transition to low-carbon, inclusive finance.

Kaan Terzioglu, CEO of VEON Group, recently visited Mobilink Bank to review its digital-first model, customer innovations, and sustainability efforts.

He noted, "Mobilink Bank's progress

in integrating sustainability is impactful. The scale of green financing and digital access shows its commitment to responsible growth."

Haaris Mahmood Chaudhary, President and CEO of Mobilink Bank, stated, "Sustainability is our growth engine. We're building a leading bank for small businesses with a digital-first, ESG-driven model."

The bank has allocated PKR 2.9 billion in green financing for clean energy and mobility solutions and transitioned 35% of its branches

to renewable energy. To support its sustainability agenda, the Bank is implementing a data-driven decarbonization framework, measuring baseline emissions at 4,489 metric tons of CO₂.

Mobilink Bank is also advancing social inclusion, benefiting over 31,000 women in 2025 and supporting a PKR 50.30 billion loan portfolio for small businesses. Initiatives like solarising a Digital Arts Lab at a girls' school show their commitment to community development.

As sustainability becomes crucial



in banking, Mobilink Bank's integrated ESG approach drives economic empowerment and innovation for a more inclusive, future-ready Pakistan.

ABHI Microfinance Bank and PEMRA partner to provide earned wage access to employees

ABHI Microfinance Bank Limited has entered into an agreement with the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) to provide Earned Wage Access (EWA) services to its employees, enabling them to access a portion of their earned salaries before the end of the monthly pay cycle.

The collaboration establishes a framework through which PEMRA employees can avail short-term salary advances through

ABHI's digital platform. The initiative aims to improve financial flexibility and support employees in managing their day-to-day financial needs without relying on informal or high-cost borrowing options.



The agreement was signed by M. Umer Rauf, Head of Digital Financial Services at ABHI Microfinance Bank, and Shamim Gul Durrani, Executive Director General (Finance) at PEMRA, along with representatives from both organisations.

Through this initiative, ABHI Microfinance Bank and PEMRA aim to promote financial well-being by providing employees with timely access to their earned income, supporting greater financial stability and reducing dependence on short-term credit alternatives.

Faysal Bank achieves AA+ Rating from PACRA



Faysal Bank Limited (FBL), one of Pakistan's leading Islamic banks, has been assigned a long-term entity rating of 'AA+ (Double AA plus)', upgraded from its earlier rating of 'AA (Double AA)', by Pakistan Credit Rating Agency (PACRA). The Bank's short-term rating is at A1+ (A-one plus) with a stable outlook.

This rating upgrade reflects FBL's successful evolution into a fully-fledged Islamic bank, cementing its position as one of Pakistan's foremost financial institutions, supported by strategic partnerships and a commitment to digital transformation.

FBL delivered a strong performance across key metrics during the period under review. Digital banking activity registered substantial growth with transactions exceeding PKR 3 trillion, while retail deposits surpassed PKR 1.4 trillion, up 36.7% over December

2024.

Current accounts expanded by 31.3% to PKR 536 billion, reflecting deepening customer confidence and continued growth in the Bank's low-cost funding base.

Total income stood at PKR 99 billion in 2025, with net spreads at PKR 69.6 billion and non-funded income showing substantial growth, contributing significantly to the overall bottom line, including a 22.7% rise in fee income and a 46.7% increase in foreign exchange income.

FBL's financing portfolio expanded by 37.6% to PKR 872 billion, lifting market share to 6.1%, while the Advance-to-Deposit Ratio improved to 61.1%, significantly outpacing the industry average of 37.5. Strengthened risk management practices reduced the infection ratio to 2.3%, and the Capital Adequacy Ratio remained at 14.0%, comfortably above regulatory requirements.

FBL also intends to issue Tier-II capital to support continued balance sheet growth. With a strategic focus on asset quality, operational efficiency, and digital innovation, the Bank is well-positioned to sustain its performance trajectory and deliver long-term value for its stakeholders.

MCB Islamic Bank appoints Hammad Khalid as President & CEO



MCB Islamic Bank Limited has appointed Hammad Khalid as its new President and Chief Executive Officer.

Khalid has been associated with MCB Islamic Bank as a Director on the Board since June 2022, during which time he contributed to the Bank's strategic planning and governance oversight.

Khalid is a member of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Pakistan (ICAP) and brings over 16 years of experience with MCB Bank Limited.





Chery Master Pakistan to launch Tiggo 7 PHEV on April 10, accelerating Pakistan's transition to plug-in hybrid technology

Chery Master Pakistan is all set to launch its C-segment 5-seater plug-in hybrid electric vehicle (PHEV), the Tiggo 7, in Pakistan on April 10, as the company expands its locally assembled new energy vehicle portfolio, building Pakistan's largest CKD PHEV lineup, and intensifies competition in the SUV market.

The company said the Tiggo 7 PHEV will be offered as a locally assembled (CKD) model from the outset, with deliveries targeted within June 2026, subject to booking volumes. The



launch comes at a time of rising fuel prices in Pakistan, with the company positioning the Tiggo 7 PHEV as a technologically advanced and cost-efficient mobility solution. It said the vehicle can reduce fuel costs by over 70% compared to conventional

petrol SUVs when used in pure electric mode for daily driving, while also contributing to lower fuel imports and reduced dependence on imported energy.

Built on Chery's fifth-generation Super Hybrid architecture, the world's best plug-in hybrid technology, engineered as a purpose-built platform, the vehicle combines a 1.5-litre turbocharged petrol engine with an 18.3 kWh battery and dedicated hybrid transmission. The system produces 255 kW (342 horsepower) and 525 Nm of torque, with a claimed 0-100 km/h acceleration time of 8.4 seconds.

Sazgar Engineering unveils Rs22bn expansion plan

Sazgar Engineering Works Limited has unveiled a major expansion and leadership restructuring plan involving fresh investment of Rs22 billion to significantly enhance its vehicle production capacity and strengthen its footprint



in Pakistan's automotive sector.

The decisions were taken at a meeting of the company's Board of Directors and were subsequently disclosed to the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX).

Sazgar said it has completed its earlier Rs11.5 billion expansion plan, under which Rs6.5 billion was invested in new assembly lines, a 5.7-megawatt solar power system and warehousing facilities.

The remaining Rs5 billion has been redirected to develop a more advanced paint shop facility to support higher production volumes and improved product quality.

BYD-MMC delivers 100 Atto 2 EVs across country in one day

Mega Motor Company (MMC), the official partner of BYD in Pakistan, delivered 100 Atto 2 electric vehicles to customers nationwide in a single day, the company announced recently.

The deliveries were carried out simultaneously across multiple cities through BYD experience centres and dealerships, reflecting the expanding retail and customer network of the Chinese automaker in Pakistan.

Designed for urban mobility, the Atto 2 offers an electric alternative to conventional fuel vehicles, combining affordability with modern design at a time of rising fuel costs. BYD has also introduced its flagship Sealion 7 in Pakistan, with deliveries already under way, expanding the company's NEV portfolio across different market segments.

MG Motor Pakistan plans \$20m expansion of Lahore plant

MG Motor Pakistan said it plans to invest \$20 million to expand its vehicle manufacturing facility in Lahore, in a move the company says will introduce new automotive technologies and support the launch of additional models in Pakistan.

The investment, backed by its

parent SAIC Motor, will expand production capacity and strengthen the local automotive supply chain while creating new jobs, the company said in a statement recently.

Chief Executive Shao JianQiang said the expansion reflects the company's long-term confidence in Pakistan's economic prospects and its evolving automotive market. The

investment will also help deepen local manufacturing and potentially support future export opportunities, he said.





PIA fleet to be expanded to 60 aircraft, 18 currently operational, Arif Habib

Arif Habib, chairman of the Arif Habib Consortium, the entity that owns Pakistan International Airlines (PIA), has said that the national flag carrier currently has 30 aircraft, of which 18 are operational. In comparison, five to six aircraft require repair and maintenance. Speaking to industrialists at the Korangi Association of Trade and Industry (KATI), he said the airline was in the process of recovering these aircraft and adding them back to its fleet, bringing the total to 26. He added that the long-term target was to expand the fleet to 60 aircraft.

Arif Habib said it was an honour to represent the business community at the government level and that he made every effort to apprise the government of the industry's issues. He said Pakistan had become more economically stable, and the year's figures showed the government had increased revenue, met all expenditures, and paid interest on debt. However, he stressed that economic growth required a reduction in production costs. He said electricity tariffs remained high because of capacity charges and

low consumption. If the available transmission system, which

exceeds 22,000 MW, were fully utilised, the per-unit cost could be reduced by Rs 10-12. He said this could only happen if electricity consumption increased. Arif Habib urged the business community to rise above political affiliations and speak with one united voice to present its concerns to the government. He said that if they remained united, the government would pay attention to their demands. He added that IT, agriculture and mining were sectors that could quickly help Pakistan overcome its problems and move towards growth.

ABAD Chairman Hasan Bakhshi said the business community should unite and form a consortium to buy and run loss-making government institutions such as the Water Board, Karachi Metropolitan Corporation and the Sindh Building Control Authority, which he said were performing poorly. Earlier, KATI President Muhammad Ikram Rajput said Arif Habib was a hero of the business community who had made a significant contribution to the country's economy. He added that PIA had once become a burden on



the country, but now Arif Habib had taken charge of it, and there was hope that the airline would regain its lost place in the world and bring pride to Pakistan again. He said the Korangi industrial zone was the backbone of the national economy, and its role in promoting industrial activity was extremely important.

KATI Deputy Patron-in-Chief Zubair Chhaya expressed concern over the state of the economy and investment climate. Habib's responsibilities were increasing, and the business community needed to play a more effective role in the current circumstances. KITE Limited Chairman Zahid Saeed said a strong think tank should be formed under Habib's leadership to help address the city's economic challenges. United Business Group Chairman Khalid Tawab said Arif Habib was a hero of the private sector who had played a major role in economic development.

Air Punjab to be launched by year-end: Mujtaba

Punjab Finance Minister and Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Mujtaba Shuja-ur-Rahman announced that the government had completed its preparatory work on Air Punjab and that a quality airline will be launched



for the public by the end of this year. Commenting on the PECA Act, he said there is nothing objectionable in the legislation, as similar laws exist in all developed nations around the world, though he acknowledged that changes could be made through dialogue if any concrete suggestions were put forward.

Islamabad Airport launches 5G

Islamabad International Airport has become the first airport in Pakistan to offer 5G services. According to the Pakistan Airport Authority (PAA), passengers at Islamabad International Airport will now benefit from ultra-fast 5G internet, enabling seamless live streaming, crystal-

clear video calls, high-speed browsing, and enhanced digital services. 5G connectivity is currently active outside the airport building and in surrounding areas.

Technical work is progressing rapidly to ensure full and improved 5G coverage inside the terminal building, PAA said and added that the



5G facility will soon be introduced at other major airports across the country.

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