

# NEWSCLIPPINGS

**JANUARY TO JUNE 2025**

## EDUCATION



## Urban Resource Centre

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### **BIEK offers another chance to 2008 inter failures**

Pursuant to the Sindh Boards' Committee of Chairman's decision to provide additional opportunities to Intermediate candidates whose last attempt expired in 2008, the Board of Intermediate Education Karachi (BIEK) has announced a special provision.

Candidates failed in their last chance to appear in the exams in 2008, may sit for the 2025 annual examination with a special fee.

They can submit their examination forms, along with a fee of Rs6,000, after verification by a Grade 17 govt officer at the UBL booth at BIEK library. The submission window is from January 6 to March 31. Alternatively, candidates can deposit the exam fee in any UBL branch using account number UBL-CMA-252536591.

(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter, The Express Tribune, 05, 04/01/2025)

### **Inter results cause uproar in PA**

The Sindh Assembly session was marred by intense uproar by the opposition on Friday. Chaos erupted in the assembly as opposition members, primarily from Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P), vehemently protested the contentious results of intermediate exams held under the Board of Intermediate Education Karachi.

Many Karachi students were unexpectedly failed, sparking outrage. When the acting speaker denied immediate discussion, the opposition's frustration boiled over, with members shouting slogans, protesting, and tearing up agenda copies in a dramatic show of dissent.

The Sindh Assembly session was convened after a long hiatus on Friday. When the proceedings began under the chairmanship of Deputy Speaker Naveed Anthony, the opposition members requested permission to discuss a point of order.

However, the acting speaker advised that they could hold discussion on their point after the Question Hour for the Excise and Taxation Department. Excise Minister Mukesh Kumar Chawla began responding to questions when the opposition started insisting that they be allowed to speak first. The Speaker told MQM member Dr Fauzia that if she does not want to ask anything during the question hour, the session would continue without addressing her query, to which she said that the opposition wants to talk about the important issue of Karachi first.

The Speaker insisted that the matter may be discussed later. Frustrated with the speaker's stance, the opposition members started protesting, chanting slogans in the house. MQM member of assembly Ijazul Haq said that the children of urban Sindh are crying, as many of them who passed with A1 grade in Matric exams were declared fail in Intermediate.

He also questioned the legitimacy of the medical test results, maintaining that it is a matter of the future of the children of Karachi, on which MQM-P can not maintain silence. Minister for Law and Parliamentary Affairs Ziaul Hassan Lanjar urged Ijazul Haq to take his seat, saying the point was already heard by the house.

Amidst the assembly's uproar, the Minister of Excise announced that property tax collection is no longer the Excise Department's responsibility, having been transferred to local government district councils in 2023. Meanwhile, Minister of Parliamentary Affairs Zia-ul-Hassan Lanjar introduced the Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Institute for Democracy and Federalism Bill 2024. The acting speaker referred the bill to the relevant standing committee for review, with a report expected to be presented to the house within ten days.

The Sindh Assembly recently approved an adjournment motion by PPP member Heer Ismail Soho, focusing on enhancing mobile phone call quality and internet services in the province. The debate on this motion is scheduled for Tuesday, coinciding with Private Members' Day, with a dedicated one-hour time slot.

On another note, a privilege motion submitted by PPP member Marvi Fasih couldn't be considered due to her absence. The motion was filed after Deputy Secretary of the Special Education Department, Taha Farooqui, allegedly displayed a harsh and aggressive attitude towards her.

Upon completion of the agenda, the acting speaker adjourned the Sindh Assembly session until three pm on Monday. Talking to the media after the session, Opposition Leader Ali Khursheedi said the results of Board of Intermediate Education Karachi (BIEK) were an eye-opener for the discrimination in all educational boards of Sindh since the last eight years.

He alleged that the Sindh government was technically exploiting the children of urban Sindh.

The PPP clique does not want to see the students from urban areas study and progress, for which the PPP ministers and mayor should be ashamed. Khursheedi blamed the ruling party for first destroying the infrastructure of Karachi, and now trying to destroy the education here.

(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter, The Express Tribune, 04, 04/01/2025)

### **University teachers to boycott classes across Sindh from today**

Teachers representing the Federation of All Pakistan Universities Academic Staff Association (Fapusa) on Wednesday announced that they would suspend teaching activities on all campuses across the province from Thursday (today) in protest over several government decisions including plan to appoint bureaucrats as vice chancellors.

They spoke at a briefing held at Karachi University (KU) following a general body meeting of the association.

"This protest will continue until the government reverses its controversial decisions regarding higher education. It is solely responsible for the disruption in academic activities," said Dr Akhtiar Ghumro, head of the Fapusa-Sindh chapter, adding that

teachers were forced to resort to this extreme step because the government had not responded positively to their genuine demands.

Explaining the teachers' stance, Dr Ghumro said: "The government has neither stepped back on its damaging move of changing the vice chancellor's appointment criteria, which would allow bureaucrats or commissioned officers to head general universities, nor has it reversed its decision on hiring teachers on a contractual basis."

The teachers argued that the autonomy of universities, their academic freedom and educational standards would be seriously affected once universities come under bureaucratic control.

"The world's best educational institutions thrive on autonomy and this move violates that principle. Appointing teachers on a contractual basis will destabilise the education system, and insecure employment will prevent teachers from focussing on research and teaching," said Dr Mohsin Ali, head of the Karachi University Teachers' Society.

The teachers also raised their concerns over the "interference of the Higher Education Commission (HEC) in universities' academic matters and what they described as a severe financial crisis affecting public sector universities, contending that the lack of financial resources, infrastructure and staff had deprived students of research facilities and negatively impacted educational quality."

Their demands included delegating the authority to issue non-objection certificate back to vice chancellors, as the current complex process delayed teacher's participation in international conferences.

The teachers' representatives in attendance included Dr Kamran Zakria (NED University Teachers Association), Dr Arshad Memon (Mehran Engineering University and Technology), Dr Akhtiar Gadahi (Sufi University), Mr Asif Hussain Samo (Sindh Madressatul Islam University), Dr Tariq Hussain Jalbani (Sindh University) and Dr Farhat Nazir Khoso (Sindh Agricultural University).

(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter, Dawn, 14, 16/01/2025)

### **MQM-P demands independent body to probe inter exam results**

The Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P) on Saturday demanded that the provincial government set up an independent inquiry committee to look into the recent controversial results of first year exams conducted by the Board of Intermediate Education Karachi (BIEK).

Speaking at a press conference, senior MQM-P leader Dr Farooq Sattar said that the committee should consist of reputable teachers, as well as members of the provincial assembly from both treasury and opposition benches.

He accused the Sindh government of deliberately downgrading the results of Karachi students of both Board of Secondary Education Karachi (BSEK) and BIEK.

He also asked the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari "to clean up the mess in Sindh" if he wants to become a national leader.

"Whenever a community is to be ruined, the educational system is destroyed, and this is what the Sindh government is doing with the urban areas," he said. "It's our demand that an independent investigative committee be formed, consisting of reputable teachers, as well as members of the provincial assembly from both sides. The papers should undergo forensic auditing, and the students should be shown their answer sheets," he demanded.

Accompanied by senior leader Syed Aminul Haq, Leader of the Opposition in Sindh Assembly Ali Khurshidi, APMSO Incharge Hafiz Shahryar, and the party members of the National Assembly and Sindh Assembly, Dr Sattar said that urban Sindh's students are being kept away from education with the connivance of incompetent officials of the educational boards.

"A clear difference is emerging in the results of Karachi and Larkana boards," he said. "We believe that the chief minister should morally resign for lowering the educational standards of Karachi's students. The education system across Pakistan has surpassed Sindh, and it is not far when Balochistan will also move ahead of Sindh. The results of NED University and medical tests reflect that Karachi's students are not incompetent. But in the intermediate examinations, 67 percent of Karachi students were declared fail," he said.

(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter, Dawn, 13, 05/01/2025)

### **MoU signed for setting up new research lab at KU**

Federal Minister for Industries and National Food Security Rana Tanveer Hussain visited Karachi University (KU) on Monday, where he signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on the establishment of a research laboratory at the International Centre for Chemical and Biological Sciences (ICCBS).

KU Vice Chancellor Prof Khalid Iraqi and Prof Ata-ur-Rehman, Patron-in-Chief of the HEJ Research Institute of Chemistry, ICCBS, welcomed the minister at the MoU signing ceremony, after which he received a briefing on the ongoing ICCBS research projects from its director, Prof Farzana Shaheen.

Under the agreement, the Ministry of National Food Security and Research will establish a National Reference Laboratory for the Department of Plant Protection (NRL-DPP) at the HEJ Institute within three years, subject to the timely approval of the project and funding.

The lab will serve as a national facility for quality checks of samples against pesticide residues and related testing and will meet the demand for emerging challenges in food and drug testing.

"A technical evaluation committee will be constituted initially for five years. The director ICCBS will be the sole administrative authority of NRL-DPP," an ICCBS spokesperson said.  
(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter, Dawn, 14, 07/01/2025)

### **BIEK body to probe first year students' complaints in 21 days**

While the Board of Intermediate Education Karachi (BIEK) has formed a 12-member committee to resolve students' complaints regarding first year exam results in three weeks, the opposition Jamaat-i-Islami and Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan slammed the Pakistan Peoples Party-led provincial government to run educational boards in an ad hoc manner.

"The BIEK has constituted a 12-member inquiry committee comprising senior teacher to address students concerns on results of pre-medical, pre-engineering, general science, home economics, commerce and arts (private groups) of intermediate part I annual examinations for 2024," said a notification.

"The inquiry committee also includes head examiners of all subjects, the principals of government colleges. The committee will examine the papers submitted for scrutiny and decide whether the complaints of the students are valid. It will also examine whether the questions in the papers were fairly comprehensible. After reviewing all the cases individually, the committee will submit its report and recommendations to the BIEK chairman within 21 days," it said.

However, the JI and the student wing of the MQM-P, once again, expressed their lack of trust on the Pakistan Peoples Party-led Sindh government and the BIEK.

Speaking at a press conference, JI-Karachi chief Monem Zafar said students in Karachi have been paying the price for "never-ending anti-Karachi and anti-education measures by the PPP government".

He highlighted that some five chairmen of the BIEK had been changed in just one year. "The government has taken educational boards as a police station as their heads are changed very frequently," he said, adding that all the boards in the Sindh province were working on ad hoc basis.

He said his party had already constituted an educational committee to address the issue. He urged all the affected students to contact the JI's committee so the party could play its role in resolving their problem.

Also on Tuesday, the All Pakistan Muttahida Students Organisation, the MQM-P's student wing, demanded that all educational boards in urban Sindh be affiliated with the federal government as the PPP government had failed to run the boards in the metropolis.

Terming it a conspiracy to declare 'fail' students who got 'A-1' grade in their matric exams, the statement said that the APMSO would never allow injustices with Karachi students.

### **Students unhappy over Rs500 per paper scrutiny fee**

The BIEK also reduced the scrutiny fee from Rs1,000 to Rs500 per paper.

However, the BIEK's decision drew reaction from students, who took to social media and demanded that the board waive off the entire fee, as it was unfair to charge Rs500 for scrutiny of one paper.

Students have been protesting against the first year results and criticising the BIEK.

Sharing his ordeal, a student said: "I had secured over 82 per cent marks in matric exams, but in the first year result, I have been declared fail in two exams and I have got only 40pc marks [in remaining papers]."

Another student shared a similar story and said that her first year percentage was significantly dropped compared to her matric result.

"In one of my papers, I attempted all questions and correctly answered 18 MCQs (multiple choice questions) out of total 20. But I got only 17 marks, out of the total 100," she said while expressing his doubt over the manner with which papers were checked.

However, acting BIEK chairman Syed Sharaf Ali Shah believed that majority of the complaints were inaccurate and students did not take classes and study hard.

When asked whether the scrutiny/reassessment of large number of students' papers would be possible, acting BIEK chairman told the morning show of ARY News: "There are a few students who are actually ready for a scrutiny. Even last year, students had raised a hue and cry but out of 1,400 students only 62 had applied for a scrutiny."

(By Waqas Ali Dawn, 13, 08/01/2025)

### **Sindh introduces vocational training at school level**

For the first time in Pakistan, Sindh has introduced technical education as a part of the traditional curriculum under the "Middle Tech Initiative."

Sindh Education Minister, Syed Sardar Ali Shah, on Thursday, inaugurated the initiative, describing it as a milestone in the province's educational reforms.

The inauguration ceremony took place at the CMS Government Boys Secondary Campus School in Karachi.

He emphasised that the programme aims to teach technical and vocational skills to students, helping them find better employment opportunities.

Mr Shah also highlighted the importance of educational reforms to meet 21st-century demands.

He stated, "This initiative is a step toward making our students socially and economically capable citizens. By bridging the gap between traditional education and practical skills, we are paving the way for a brighter future for our youth."

The minister further noted that challenges such as limited resources often hinder children's education. Through initiatives like these, students could become self-reliant during their school years and manage their educational expenses while also support their families.

He announced that after successfully introducing "Middle Tech Initiative" in schools, plans are underway to expand it to matriculation-level "Metric Tech" and eventually to intermediate-level "Inter Tech" classes in colleges.

In the first phase, 300 schools across Sindh have been equipped to provide technical education to 65,000 students alongside traditional learning. Courses in fields such as agriculture, applied electrician, beautician, dress making, fundamental of cooking, graphics designing, hotel management, introduction to tourism, internet of things, livestock, media production and plumbing have been added to the school curriculum.

Secretary of Education Zahid Ali Abbasi said 1,600 computer labs would be established in Sindh's schools this year to achieve the objectives of the "Middle Tech Initiative", along with other necessary facilities.

Chief Advisor of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Chiho Ohashi shared that the agency has supported teacher training and curriculum development for the initiative. Additional technical courses, including internet of things, media production and tourism, would be introduced soon. JICA also planned to continue its collaboration in the future.

JICA has provided technical assistance to the School Education and Literacy Department for the "Middle Tech Initiative," focussing on curriculum development, teacher training, and setting up laboratories in schools.

During the ceremony, the minister and other dignitaries officially launched the graphic designing curriculum, calling it a proud moment of his tenure.

(By Dawn Reporter, 14, 10/01/2025)

## Testing exams

THE current controversy vis-à-vis the Board of Intermediate Education Karachi's (BIEK) exam results raises many doubts about our exam system all over the country. A political party has charged that a large number of students have been wrongly failed and that this should be probed by an independent body. The fact is that an honest investigation is warranted to expose the farce our public sector examinations have become.



Neither is the paradox of foreign school-leaving exams ever discussed. The need for the two private exam boards that have emerged in the last two decades has not been explained either. Since exams are the key criteria to determining the quality of education being imparted to children in Pakistan, neglecting them amounts to camouflaging the poor learning that is presumably taking place in our schools.

Let us first have a look at our local matriculation and intermediate examination boards. There are 28 of them in the country — eight in Sindh alone. Every province manages its own boards, while the Federal Board is for Islamabad Capital Territory, though its jurisdiction also extends to institutions across Pakistan that are affiliated with it.

To give the reader an idea of how the boards are faring, I shall focus on the Karachi boards, of which I have personal experience. In 2024, approximately 167,000 students appeared for their matriculation exams; over 80 per cent passed. Over 88,000 students appeared for their intermediate exams, but less than half managed to clear all their papers. (These results have been removed from the BIEK's website.) For one set of students, exams seemed to be child's play, while for the other it became a formidable challenge. Small wonder the results of the medical college entrance tests were so appalling.

*Foreign exams are splitting us into two classes.*

Obviously, the two boards mentioned are not functioning as they should be. Anecdotal evidence suggests that resort to unfair means is common, with question papers being leaked before the exams are held, students smuggling in 'pharrahs', mobile phones and even books into the examination halls, and marks being changed with the help of examiners, whose palms are greased lavishly for the purpose. How would one react to instructions issued by ministers and other officials to omit a part of the curriculum from the purview of the paper or show leniency in marking? Many decades ago, I met an ex-controller of exams who confided that he had resigned as he faced death threats from a political party that wanted him to pass candidates of one ethnicity so that they would get jobs. The Intermediate Board listed on its website (later withdrawn) that 189 students were caught cheating; 89 were found using their mobile phones to cheat; and six people were found impersonating the exam candidate.

Given the abominable state of our government boards, it is not strange that private schools catering to the needs of the children of the elite are heading for O- and A-Levels examinations. The major reservations I have in respect of these foreign exams are two. First, they are beyond the reach of people of modest means. Secondly, these exams are splitting us into two classes, which is not a desirable feature of our society.

It has been reported that in 2024, nearly 60,000 students appeared for their O- and A-Levels examinations. Each child had to pay nearly Rs240,000 as exam fees. Collectively, the country spent about Rs14.4 billion in foreign currency. Logically, this cannot be justified.

The Aga Khan University Examination Board (AKUEB) has mercifully emerged as an indigenous substitute for foreign boards. It has been functioning since 2007, and its performance has been found to be good. It began as a matric board but has moved on to add the intermediate examination to its agenda. It also expanded its role from a purely examining body to an institution that extends its support to the teachers of affiliated schools.

Its latest move has been to enter into an MOU with the Knowledge Platform for facilitating transfer of knowledge digitally. Since a major factor in our poor state of education is the missing or abysmal training of teachers, inducting the Knowledge Platform appears to be a promising move. Three years ago, the Balochistan High Court had directed some of the local boards to seek guidance from the AKUEB, which amounts to an official endorsement of its standards. There is a need to get more schools to be affiliated with it. The Ziauddin Board is still too young to comment on.

The fact is that education in Pakistan needs a multifaceted approach if it is to be revamped. It is not just one sector that needs to be addressed if reform has to have an impact.  
(By Zubeida Mustafa Dawn, 07, 10/01/2025)

### **Sindh govt's intervention sought in Board of Intermediate Education Karachi first year exam results probe**

A week after the Board of Intermediate Education Karachi (BIEK) announced a committee to investigate allegations of wrongdoing in the first-year exam results, multiple students expressed their lack of trust in the body, while the opposition Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P) and Jamaat-i-Islami (JI) have demanded that the Sindh government itself set up a panel to probe BIEK affairs.

Approximately 67 per cent of first year (science) students failed their exams, conducted by the BIEK, in one or more subjects, resulting in widespread public outcry that forced the BIEK to constitute an inquiry committee on Jan 5 to examine the papers submitted for scrutiny and decide in 21 days whether the complaints against results are valid.

Talking to *Dawn*, Leader of the Opposition in the Sindh Assembly Ali Khurshidi of MQM-P said: "Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Zia Lanjar had ensured us during a Sindh Assembly session on Jan 6 that a parliamentary committee would be formed to probe the controversial exam results. But no such body has been formed by the provincial govt so far. We believe that a parliamentary body is important so that it can oversee the findings and investigation of the BIEK committee.

"However, it's important that the committee look into not just the scrutiny of papers, but the overall irregularities that have created all these problems in the results," he added.

When contacted, JI Karachi chief Monem Zafar told *Dawn* that his party demanded that the provincial government form an inquiry committee.

"The Inter board is itself responsible for the tampering with the results so a committee formed by it is not enough. The provincial government should itself constitute a committee. And that committee's findings must be made public and all those who are found involved in the tampering with the results must be held accountable," he said.

"It is not enough to just increase the students' marks and get done with this problem as had been done last time when a similar issue had arisen. The committee should include all stakeholders to assess the overall irregularities that took place," he added.

The JI chief also demanded waiving the entire fee for scrutiny of the exam papers.

"The students have suffered due to the blunders of the BIEK and now they're also supposed to pay a scrutiny fee to get their issue resolved. That is not fair. Many students' parents are facing financial difficulties. It's not that easy for them to pay even that amount. Instead of reducing the fee, the board should end it," Mr Zafar demanded.

Meanwhile, the students also expressed dissatisfaction over the BIEK body.

On different social media platforms, many were seen criticising the committee, saying it would be of no benefit and that their future had been put at stake.

"The committee is of no benefit because this 'work' is being done by the Sindh government in a very systematic way to affect education in government schools and colleges and profit private institutes," said one Facebook user.

"These are just dramas by the Sindh government who actually wants to destroy public sector education in Karachi," wrote Uroosa while Syed Akhtar said: "Only specific students' marks would be increased and the government would make money out of it."

A large number of students along with their parents had recently gathered at the Karachi Press Club after the formation of the BIEK body, and staged a protest against the Sindh government and board officials and demanded justice.  
(By Waqas Ali Dawn, 13, 13/01/2025)

### **House committee formed to investigate BIEK exam results**

Accepting the demand of opposition parties, the Sindh Assembly on Monday finally formed a parliamentary committee to investigate the controversial results of the intermediate board in Karachi.



While announcing the formation of the committee, headed by Education Minister Syed Sardar Shah, Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Zia Lanjar assured the House that there would be no compromise on the issue of the future of children and said that competent and capable chairmen of education boards would be appointed very soon.

The committee, comprising Sadia Javed, Taha Ahmed, Shabbir Ahmed Qureshi, Yousuf Baloch, Wasim Ahmed, Farooq Ahmed as members, was constituted following a call attention notice given by the Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan member Abdul Waseem.

The JI and MQM-P had been raising the issue of wrongdoing in the results of intermediate exams in the house since the start of the recent assembly session. They had strongly protested over the issue in the house as the party members were denied to take up the issue.

*Education minister, six treasury, opposition members to conduct inquiry into students' concerns over first year exam*

Mr Waseem said that he had to move a call attention notice on the issue of the poor results as the party members were not allowed by the chair to speak on point of order.

He said that there were irregularities going on in the city's intermediate board and a large number of students were affected by them.

The law minister said that he had already offered the opposition to hold talks on the matter. "If it is about the future of children, we would definitely resolve the issue amicably," he assured the opposition.

Mr Lanjar told the house that interviews for the chairmen of boards across the province were underway. "Efforts are being made to ensure that good and capable people are appointed chairmen of the boards," he added.

#### **Increase in dog-bite cases**

In her call attention notice, MQM-P's Farah Sohail said that there was a huge increase in dog-bite incidents in 2024 and asked the minister concerned as to what steps were being taken to contain the menace.

She said as many as 18 people were killed in dog bite incidents in 2024, adding that 11 of the victims died as they did not get vaccine.

The MQM-P MPA said that Rabies Control Programme Sindh (RCPS) was launched in 2021 but according to media reports it was not functional due to paucity of funds. "There is helpline 1093 which is not active, while the RCPS website is also closed," she said.

In reply to her notice, Parliamentary Secretary for Municipalities Siraj Qasim Soomro said that the RCPS faced shortage of funds due to Covid-19 and other financial constraints of the provincial government. He said that the RCPS office was properly working with the sanctioned staff and application was also there to lodge complaints of stray dogs.

However, he said that the towns and union committees were responsible to curb the menace of stray dogs. He shared that the over 13,500 stray dogs were neutered and over 25,000 others were vaccinated by the RCPS, adding that the anti-rabies vaccine was available at government health facilities across the province.

#### **Bill to appoint bureaucrats as VC introduced**

The law minister also tabled a bill to amend the universities law.

The chair referred the legislation to the standing committee concerned for deliberations.

Later, the house was adjourned to Tuesday (today).

(By Tahir Siddiqui Dawn, 13, 14/01/2025)

### **First-year students protest 'changed' BIEK results**

A large number of students gathered outside the Board of Intermediate Education Karachi (BIEK) on Thursday and staged a protest against what they termed wrongdoing in the first-year exam results which left over 60 per cent students failed. They were demanding free, fair and immediate investigation into the issue.



Participating in the protest organised by the Islami Jamiat-i-Talaba (IJT), the protesters also demanded the authorities to take action against the officials involved. Addressing the protest demonstration, Jamaat-i-Islami Karachi chief Munim Zafar alleged that the board was directly responsible for the manipulation of the results.

"The Sindh government's decision to devise a parliamentary committee is not enough," he said. "The committee's findings should be made public, and anyone found involved in the result tampering must be held accountable. Merely raising students' marks to resolve the issue, as was done previously when a similar problem cropped up, is not sufficient. The committee should involve all relevant stakeholders to thoroughly investigate the broader irregularities that took place."

The JI city chief stated that while the provincial education budget had surpassed Rs1.1 trillion over the past three years, there were still 2,997 public schools lacking boundary walls.

Addressing the protesters, IJT Karachi president Aabish Siddiqui called on the Sindh government to end discrimination against the students in the city, describing the situation as unacceptable, with the educational future of 80 per cent of students at risk.

"The students have suffered due to blunders of the BIEK officials," he said.  
(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter, Dawn, 13, 17/01/2025)

### **BIEK 'remedy' fails to impress students**

The annual examination results of the Board of Intermediate Education Karachi (BIEK) have been mired in a controversy. The board chairman has proposed some remedial measures, but the affected students seem unsatisfied.

Disregarding the formation of an investigation committee and the waiver of the scrutiny fee, students insist on personally reviewing their answer sheets. The BIEK administration, however, has denied this request, citing logistical challenges.

According to BIEK officials, it would be impractical to allow millions of students to directly check their answer sheets. However, the officials have added that students with glaring discrepancies in their marks can apply for rechecking under the supervision of BIEK.

BIEK Examinations Director Zarina Rashid said on Thursday that they have taken steps to accommodate student grievances. "The scrutiny fee, previously set at Rs1,000 per paper, was initially halved and has now been completely waived," he told The Express Tribune.

Moreover, students who achieved 80% or higher in matriculation but scored below 55% in their 11th-grade exams can view their answer sheets, he said, adding that if they remain dissatisfied, they will undergo interviews for further assessment.

"The scrutiny process will be completed within 30 days," Rashid further said. "Revised results, if any, will be sent to the students' homes. Our office remains open to address any remaining concerns." For the first time, the scrutiny process will involve evaluating the correctness of answers, rather than merely recounting marks.

Many students still remain unconvinced. They argue that the current system lacks transparency and question the credibility of those tasked with rechecking their answer sheets. "If our marks don't improve, our future will be ruined," one affected student told The Express Tribune. He demanded alternative solutions and warned of drastic actions, including transferring to other educational boards or even leaving the country.

The BIEK has advised affected students to download the scrutiny form from its official website and submit their applications.  
(By Ayesha Khan Ansari The Express Tribune, 04, 18/01/2025)

### **HEC opposes Sindh's plan to appoint bureaucrats as VCs**

The ongoing teachers' strike at public-sector universities gathered more steam on Friday when the Higher Education Commission (HEC) put its weight behind two of their key demands and urged the Sindh chief minister to consider the autonomous status of universities and withdraw a proposed amendment to the Sindh Universities and Institutes Laws Act.

The amendment may allow non-PhD candidates and bureaucrats to become vice chancellors of higher learning institutes.

In a letter addressed to Sindh CM Murad Ali Shah, a copy of which is available with *Dawn*, HEC Chairman Dr Mukhtar Ahmed described the plan to appoint non-academics as vice chancellors as a "retrogressive" step, while reminding the provincial government of an important relevant decision of the Council of Common Interests (CCI) taken at its 44th meeting dated April 7, 2021.

According to this decision, "Higher Education Commission will be the sole standard setting national organisation with regard to higher education in the country."

*Dr Mukhtar urges CM Murad to withdraw proposed amendment to universities law; teachers' boycott of academic activities continues*

He writes, "The Amendment, if passed, would bring significant changes in the basic eligibility criteria and would enable the non-PhDs to apply and be considered for selection to the revered position of the Vice Chancellor/Head of the Institution, hence paving way for the appointment of non-academics — a retrogressive step which will not only have serious consequences on the academic standards, but would also affect academic freedom and critical thinking."

It might compromise upon the stature and attached veneration of the office, besides creating an unfortunate precedent for other provinces/regions, he adds.

The letter clarifies that the guidelines for the selection of the rector/vice chancellor were approved by the commission — the governing body for the country's higher education with representation from all provinces — at its 12th meeting held on Feb 24, 2007.

"The said guidelines entail the eligibility criteria for the position of Vice Chancellor/Rector which requires an outstanding academician of international stature having preferably earned a doctorate degree, teaching and research experience publications in HEC-recognised journals, administrative and financial management expertise in reputable institutions, and an age limit of 65 years and emphasise that the appointment be made through an Independent Search Committee," the letter says.



It also refers to the universities' autonomous status. "Moreover, Higher Education Institutions are autonomous entities by virtue of their Acts and governed under provisions of acts/statutes/regulations through their statutory authorities and any such appointments of non-academic administrators undermine the academic integrity of the universities."

Further, the HEC chairman also emphasises the need for sharing any such proposals with the commission.

"It would be appreciated if such proposals are shared with the HEC for a broader consultation in the commission and consensus be reached in the larger interests of the HE sector."

### **Classes remain suspended**

Meanwhile, classes at most public sector universities in the province remained suspended on the second consecutive day on Friday on account of teachers' strike.

The strike call for an indefinite period was given by Federation of All Pakistan Universities Academic Staff Association (Fapuasa).

"We took this step to highlight the deteriorating state of higher education, governmental apathy, and the severity of challenges faced by universities," said president of Fapuasa Dr Ikhtiar Ghumro.

He called upon the provincial government to restore universities' autonomous status and withdraw the proposed amendment/s to the Universities Act under which bureaucrats/non-academics can head universities.

"The government must stop contractual hiring and address financial crises on campuses," he said, adding that shortages of resources were adversely affecting the quality of education.

(By Faiza Ilyas Dawn, 13, 18/01/2025)

### **Academic activities suspended in universities across Sindh for third day**

Academic activities at public sector universities across the province remained suspended for the third consecutive day on Monday amid a stand-off between teachers and the Sindh government over the latter's plan to appoint bureaucrats as vice chancellor.

On Jan 16, university teachers began their strike in protest against recent government decisions, including a plan to hire teachers on a contractual basis.

"Since there is no progress on the matter, teachers will continue with their classes' boycott on Tuesday [today]," said Federation of All Pakistan Universities Academic Staff Association (Fapuasa) head Dr Ikhtiar Ghumro.

He told *Dawn* that a meeting earlier scheduled for Monday would now be held on Tuesday to chalk-out a strategy for making the protest more impactful.

"We believe that the grave issues plaguing Sindh's universities can no longer be ignored. Our unity delivers a clear message to the government to come forward and address these critical issues."

#### *Teachers' boycott of classes to continue today*

Earlier in the day, Sindh Education Minister Sardar Shah expressed concerns over the ongoing boycott of classes and told the media that the appointment of VCs was solely an administrative decision that needed to be taken by the provincial government.

Reacting to his statement, the association stated: "It is important to clarify that vice chancellors are not only administrative heads but also chair critical academic bodies, such as the academic council, syndicate, senate, and the Board of Advanced Studies and Research, where MPhil and PhD degrees are awarded.

"How can a non-PhD individual, who lacks any knowledge of research, MPhil, or PhD programmes, effectively promote research and academics in universities? Universities are institutions of higher learning and research, not mere management entities," the statement reads.

Meanwhile, a delegation of Karachi University Teachers' Society (Kuts) visited the temporary headquarters of the Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P) and met MNA Aminul Haque, Leader of the Opposition in Sindh Assembly Ali Khurshidi and others.

"The lawmakers endorsed all our demands including withdrawal of the proposed amendment, allowing appointment of bureaucrats as vice chancellors, and the move to appoint teachers on a contractual basis," Dr Mohsin Ali of Kuts said, adding that the MQM-P assured the teachers that the matter would be raised in the upcoming assembly's session followed by a presser along with Fapuasa team.

The Kuts delegation was comprised of Dr Maroof bin Rauf, Dr Nida Ali, Dr Moiz Khan, Dr Basit Ansari, Zeeshan Iqbal and Dr Shah Ali-ul-Qadr.

(By Faiza Ilyas Dawn, 13, 21/01/2025)

### **CM approves evening classes in schools to reduce dropout rate**

Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah on Monday expressed concerns regarding the 46 per cent dropout rate among students who complete their primary education due to the lack of middle schools in the area and directed the school education department to introduce afternoon shifts for middle school classes at primary schools, aiming to address this problem.



At a meeting held at the CM House, Mr Shah was briefed by Education Minister Syed Sardar Shah that there are 16.89 million children aged five to 16 enrolled in the province, which includes 5.20m in public schools and 4.01m in private schools.

Additionally, schools under the Sindh Education Foundation (SEF) have 93,000 students, non-formal education serves 5.66m children, and madressah have 1.03m students.

During the discussion, the CM pointed out two major challenges facing the school education department, enrolling 7.8m out-of-school children and reducing the dropout rate, which currently stands at 46pc.

He emphasised that these two challenges could only be addressed by strengthening both formal and non-formal education streams in terms of access, quality and governance.

To a question, the CM was informed that there were 36,300 primary schools and 4,600 post-primary/middle schools. The significant gap between the number of primary and post-primary schools contributes to the dropout rate.

Shah directed the education department to initiate post-primary schools during the second shift/afternoon shift in primary schools, with plans to upgrade them to the middle school level.

He emphasised that private schools are significant stakeholders, catering to 40pc of enrolment, and therefore must be properly regulated, monitored, and evaluated.

### **Visits two schools**

The CM also paid a surprise visit to two schools operated by different NGOs in the underprivileged localities of Korangi, in collaboration with the SEF.

He first visited the Green Crescent Trust (GCT) School in Bilal Colony, toured the classrooms and engaged with the students, reviewing academic activities and the daily attendance register.

Mr Shah learned that the SEF offers regular financial assistance to partner schools based on student enrolment. The SEF currently funds Rs1,300 per student per month for its affiliated schools run by NGOs.

The chief minister instructed the education minister to conduct regular inspections of SEF-affiliated schools in the city, emphasising that the government's efforts should yield positive results.

Later, the chief minister visited the Digital Micro School in Awami Colony, which also operated in partnership with the SEF.

During his visit, he learned that tablet computers are being used to educate 100 students at the school, all of whom come from underprivileged backgrounds and had not previously attended school.

He reviewed how students were using the tablet computers for regular classroom education, focussing on English and Mathematics through an engaging learning system.

He stated that he initiated this surprise visit to assess the effectiveness of using tablet computers in an underserved area, adding that this technology could be extended to other schools if it proves beneficial for student learning.

(By Dawn Reporter, 13, 21/01/2025)

## **CM defends decision to appoint bureaucrats as VCs**

Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah has voiced frustration over his inability to remove vice chancellors accused of sexual harassment, despite repeated efforts.

He also drew attention to another case involving a VC who misappropriated university funds to cover travel expenses for a visiting French team - expenses that had already been paid for by the team itself.

He was addressing the fourth Research and Technology Showcase 2025, organised by the Sindh Higher Education Commission at the Expo Centre on Thursday.

The event showcased 417 research projects from 41 universities across Sindh, highlighting the province's growing potential in technology and innovation.

Other speakers included HEC Chairman Prof Tariq Rafi and NED University VC Prof Sarosh Lodhi.

The chief minister stressed the importance of appointing qualified VCs through a search committee process. While holding a PhD and a strong research background are necessary, the current dire administrative conditions in public sector universities necessitate an amendment to the law to require candidates to have prior administrative experience, he said. "This proposed bill has already been tabled in the provincial assembly," he added.

Shah claimed that certain VCs and vested interests had incited protests in response to the proposed changes, but he made it clear that he would hold them accountable if the protests continued. He cited the example of three VCs who were appointed based on their PhDs and research credentials but were later nominated in sexual harassment cases. Although CM attempted to remove them from office, they secured stay orders from the court, allowing them to remain in their positions until their tenures ended.

The chief minister also cited the case of a VC who inappropriately withdrew funds from the university's account to cover travel expenses for a French team, despite the fact that the team had already financed their own travel. CM Shah expressed his dissatisfaction that, despite these controversies, the VC remains in office.

"These are the reasons we are pushing for a law amendment to introduce safeguards," he said. "Our students deserve VCs who are not only qualified but capable of running universities effectively and securing the nation's future." The new law would not bar PhDs and professors from becoming VCs but would require them to compete with other qualified candidates.

Moreover, the chief minister expressed disappointment with a letter he had received from the federal HEC, criticising their premature release of the letter to the media before it was officially sent out.

While speaking on the event theme, he stressed the importance of reducing Pakistan's reliance on foreign products by nurturing local innovations. "True prosperity comes from transforming ideas into tangible outcomes," he added. He stressed the need to address the economic impact of excessive imports and urged immediate investment in homegrown solutions to solve local problems and decrease dependency on foreign goods.

(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter, The Express Tribune, 04, 24/01/2025)

### Stop teachers' protests or face accountability, Murad warns VCs

Irked by Sindh-wide teachers' protests and suspension of academic activities in almost every public sector university in the province, Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah on Thursday defended the proposed legislation that will allow bureaucrats to head universities as vice chancellors and warned VCs of "universities experiencing protests" to stop them or get ready to be held "accountable".



"Some vice chancellors and vested interests have instigated protests in response to this amendment, but we know how the law is applied. I am warning the concerned vice chancellors to stop the protests in their universities; otherwise, I will hold you accountable," he said while speaking at the 4th Research & Technology Showcase 2025 here at the Expo Centre.

The event featured 41 universities from across Sindh, presenting 417 groundbreaking projects and innovations, highlighting the province's creative potential in technology and research.

While the CM did not take any name, he presented a charge sheet against VCs of several public sector universities, accusing them of sexual harassment and corruption.

He was also not happy with the Higher Education Commission that threw its weight behind the protesting teachers by writing a letter to the CM and expressing concerns over the proposed amendment to pave the way for the appointment of non-PhDs and bureaucrats as VCs.

The CM blamed the HEC for "instigating protests by releasing the letter to the media before officially dispatching it to him".

He claimed that his inability to remove four VCs — three accused of sexual harassment and another of financial malpractice — and the "dire administrative conditions" prevailing at public sector universities constituted as the main reasons for the cabinet's decision to approve the amendment to the universities law.

"Given the dire administrative conditions in public sector universities, which are on the verge of collapse, the cabinet decided to amend the law to include a requirement for administrative experience. The bill has been referred to the assembly," he said.

Without mentioning any name, Mr Shah recalled that three VCs — all holding PhD degrees with required published research papers to their credit and appointed through a search committee — were found involved in sexual harassment cases.

He pointed to another case of a VC who allegedly drew funds from the university's account for the travel expenses of a visiting French team, although the foreign experts had already covered their costs independently.

"I tried to remove them, but they got stay orders from the court and remained at their positions until the completion of their tenure. These are the main reasons we are amending the law — to establish safeguards because our children deserve the best vice-chancellors who know how to effectively run universities and secure the nation's future," he said.

He clarified that the proposed legislation didn't prevent PhDs and professors from being appointed as vice-chancellors. However, it required them to compete with other candidates, he added.

### Wants dependency on foreign products reduced

Talking about the conference, the CM stressed the urgent need to reduce Pakistan's dependency on foreign products by fostering home-grown solutions.

"A country achieves prosperity by transforming ideas into practical achievements," he stated.

He highlighted the economic impact of excessive imports and called for immediate investment in local innovations that address societal challenges and reduce reliance on foreign goods.

He urged universities to strengthen their academia-industry partnerships, drawing examples from global success stories.

"Our universities must support students and researchers in developing practical solutions to immediate local issues. This is the mindset we need to cultivate," he remarked.

Addressing young researchers and innovators present at the event, the CM emphasised their pivotal role in shaping Sindh and Pakistan's future. "You have the power to transform lives and strengthen our nation with each innovation," he said while encouraging them to take pride in their contributions to society.

The chief minister reiterated the Sindh government's unwavering commitment to higher education and community development through the practical application of knowledge.

Mr Shah also commended the partnership between Sindh HEC and the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FPCCI), facilitated by FPCCI Vice President Saquib Fayyaz Magoon.

"May today's showcase inspire us all to aim higher and achieve greater milestones," he concluded.

Sindh HEC Chairman Prof Tariq Rafi and NED University Vice Chancellor Prof Sarosh Lodi also spoke.

The event was attended by diplomats, vice-chancellors, researchers, and industry leaders, all united by a vision to bridge academia and industry, paving the way for economic growth and technological advancement in Sindh.

(By Faiza Ilyas Dawn, 13, 24/01/2025)

### **CM Murad's 'harsh' words draw ire of teachers**

Teachers held protests at several public sector universities on Friday, condemning what they described as "chief minister's harsh speech" made a day earlier at a programme.

The remarks also attracted severe criticism from the Pakistan chapter of the Federation of All Pakistan Universities Academic Staff Association (Fapuasa) which announced its support to the ongoing strike of its Sindh chapter against the appointment of bureaucrats as heads of universities and hiring of teachers on a contractual basis.

At the programme, Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah had warned vice chancellors (VCs) "of universities experiencing protests" to stop them or get ready to be held "accountable".

He had also justified the government move of changing the criteria for appointment of VCs while accusing some of them of sexual harassment and corruption, criticising the Higher Education Commission (HEC) for backing the protesting teachers' demand.

"There is a public outcry against his remarks. We are deeply hurt and disappointed. The chief minister is a highly educated individual, always showing great regard to his friend who heads a prominent public sector university. This was not expected of him," regretted Dr Mohsin Ali heading the Karachi University Teachers' Society.

On Friday, the teachers vented out their disapproval of those remarks and held demonstrations at different institutions, including Karachi University; Sindh Madressatul Islam University, Karachi; Sindh University, Jamshoro; Sindh Agricultural University, Tandojam; Mehran University of Engineering and Technology, Tandojam, and its Khairpur campus; Govt College University, Hyderabad; Shah Abdul Latif University, Khairpur, and Sukkur-IBA University.

In a statement, Fapuasa Pakistan chapter stated that it fully supported the ongoing strike by the Fapuasa Sindh, which was a legitimate protest against "Sindh government's illogical and detrimental decision".

"We denounce the statement made by the chief minister, Sindh, in which he justified the change (in appointment criteria of vice chancellors) by alleging moral and financial corruption among vice chancellors," Fapuasa Pakistan President Dr Amjad Abbas Magsi said.

The chief minister's remarks, he said, not only undermined the dignity of the vice chancellors but also disregarded the role of the HEC tasked with setting the criteria for the appointment of the VCs and faculty members.

The association emphasised that the HEC's role remains valid under the Constitution and the NFC (National Finance Commission) Award meetings, as the HEC hadn't been fully dissolved.

It called upon the provincial government to take appropriate punitive action against a vice chancellor if he was found in immoral conduct and financial mismanagement.

"We call upon the chief minister, Sindh, to act responsibly and uphold the sanctity of academic institutions by restoring the original criteria for appointment of vice chancellors," it said.

(By Faiza Ilyas Dawn, 13, 25/01/2025)

### **Education on the brink**

The global climate crisis is wreaking havoc on education systems, leaving millions of children vulnerable to a future of uncertainty. Across the world, 242 million students experienced disruptions to their education in 2024 due to climate-induced hazards, as detailed in Unicef's Global Snapshot of Climate-Related School Disruptions in 2024. Among the countries hardest hit, Pakistan stands as a stark example, with over 26 million children affected this year alone.

In South Asia, a region disproportionately affected, 128 million children had their schooling disrupted. Heatwaves, the most frequent and devastating hazard, not only forced school closures but also rendered classrooms inoperable due to unbearable

conditions. The month of April, in particular, saw record-breaking heatwaves that affected millions of students, with dehydration and heat stress making it impossible for children to focus on learning. Pakistan's case is particularly alarming. The combination of extreme heat, floods and recurring natural disasters has turned schools into collateral damage in the climate crisis. Classrooms have been destroyed, repurposed as emergency shelters or abandoned altogether. Even when schools remain operational, deplorable conditions have created an untenable environment for both students and teachers. Economic hardships exacerbate these issues, with families pulling children - particularly girls - out of school to prioritise survival. This global education crisis demands urgent action. Schools in vulnerable countries, including Pakistan, must be equipped with climate-resilient infrastructure. Solar-powered cooling systems and sustainable materials should become standard, while remote learning systems must be developed to ensure continuity during disasters. Beyond infrastructure, there is a pressing need to integrate climate education into national curricula worldwide.

The international community has a critical role to play in addressing this crisis. Climate finance must prioritise education, ensuring that resources are directed toward building resilient systems in the most vulnerable regions. Developed countries have a moral obligation to support nations like Pakistan, Bangladesh and Zimbabwe in protecting their children's futures.  
(By Editorial, The Express Tribune, 14, 26/01/2025)

### **Sindh university teachers to boycott classes today as stand-off with govt continues**

The stand-off between the provincial government and university teachers over the former's plan to appoint bureaucrats as vice chancellors of public sector universities continued on Sunday as the Federation of All Pakistan Universities Academic Staff Associations (Fapusa)-Sindh decided to keep academic activities suspended on Monday (today) and hold protest rallies across the province.

Teachers representing the University of Karachi, Sindh Madressatul Islam University Karachi, NED University of Engineering and Technology, Mehran Engineering University Jamshoro, Sindh University, Government College University Hyderabad, Sindh Agriculture University Tandojam, University of Sufism and Modern Sciences, Quaid-e-Awam University of Engineering and Technology Nawabshah, Shah Abdul Latif University Khairpur, Mehran University Campus Khairpur, Technical University Khairpur, Shaikh Ayaz University Shikarpur, and other institutions participated in the meeting.

"The association unequivocally holds the Sindh government responsible for the ongoing crisis in public sector universities. Instead of engaging constructively with stakeholders, the government's dismissive and high-handed approach has intensified the crisis.

"Faculty members have been compelled to suspend academic activities due to the government's neglect and provocative behaviour," says a statement released by the association after the meeting.

The association decided that teachers' associations from all public sector universities, under the banner of Fapusa-Sindh, will hold a large-scale protest at the Karachi Press Club on Tuesday (tomorrow).

It invited other organisations, including the Sindh Professors and Lecturers Association (SPLA), Karachi Bar Association, and civil society groups, to join the demonstration in solidarity with the teaching fraternity's demands.

It also decided to consult prominent lawyers in Sindh to explore the possibility of filing a petition against the proposed amendment bill that threatens the autonomy and effectiveness of public sector universities.  
(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter, Dawn, 13, 27/01/2025)

### **Third-party review, extra marks likely options to end BIEK results controversy**

The parliamentary committee of the Sindh Assembly, formed to investigate the controversial results of the Board of Intermediate Education Karachi (BIEK), is learnt to have considered different options to address the issue.

Informed sources told *Dawn* that the committee at its maiden meeting discussed at length the options including third party assessment of the answer sheets or compensatory increase in the students' overall percentage across the board.

They said that the students who got extremely poor percentage in the intermediate board exams in Karachi might have a ray of hope as the parliamentary committee was likely to recommend for an increase of 10 to 15 per cent to their percentage.

The sources said that the committee deliberated upon the possible ways to make up the loss of the students, many of whom had secured more than 80 to 85 per cent in matriculation, but were given less than 50 per cent marks in the intermediate exams, while several others also failed in many subjects.

The Sindh Assembly had last week formed a house committee to investigate the controversial results of the intermediate board in Karachi, accepting the demand of the opposition parties in the assembly.

The committee, headed by Education Minister Syed Sardar Shah and comprising Sadia Javed, Taha Ahmed, Shabbir Ahmed Qureshi, Yousuf Baloch, Wasim Ahmed, and Farooq Ahmed, discussed several proposals to give relief to the affected students, including assessment of their answer sheets through a third party.

Talking to *Dawn*, the education minister said that the committee would forward its recommendation to the competent authority after deliberating upon all possible means to rectify the results.

He said that the committee as a first step had called for the report of the investigation committee constituted earlier to probe into the poor results in the intermediate exams.



Mr Shah said that the affected students had been advised to submit their complaints regarding poor results. "Justice will be done with the students and strict action will be taken against the officials responsible," he added.

The sources said that the house committee was scheduled to meet again on Wednesday as it wanted to dispose of the issue by Feb 15.

Opposition Leader in Sindh Assembly Ali Khurshidi, also a member of the committee, said that formation of the house committee to investigate the poor examination results was itself an ample proof of injustice meted out to the students of the city.

He said that there were severe irregularities in the examination and a committee was also formed to look into the matter last year too. "The deputy controller who was found involved in the irregularities was later elevated to the post of controller," he said.

The leader of the Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan said that his party had first raised the issue of poor results in intermediate board in the house as a large number of the students were affected.

He said that their target was to get the affected students compensated as soon as possible as the issue had already been pending disposal lately.

The opposition leaders said that the committee would recommend to the authorities to give an increase of 10 to 20 per cent in the percentage of the affected students.

He said that the traditional scrutiny procedure for the answer sheets was of no use as it was only about re-calculating the sums of marks on the answers. "You cannot dispute the marks given by the examiner in the scrutiny of answer sheet," he added.

The MQM-P leader said that there should be a third party assessment of the results, but added that it would be a time consuming task.

(By Tahir Siddiqui Dawn, 13, 27/01/2024)

### **Bill tabled in PA for appointment of bureaucrats as chairmen of Sindh education boards**

The provincial government on Monday tabled the Sindh Boards of Intermediate and Secondary Education (Amendment) Bill in the Sindh Assembly, finally paving the way for bureaucrats to be appointed as chairmen of the boards.

Deputy Speaker Anthony Naveed referred the amended bill to the relevant standing committee for consideration after it was introduced by Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Ziaul Hassan Lanjar.

The amended bill contained one of the most controversial provisions enabling the provincial government to appoint a senior civil servant as the chairman of any educational board.

The proposed amendment in the bill said: "Provided that the Chairman shall be appointed by the Controlling Authority either through direct recruitment process or by transfer from amongst the cadre officers of BPS-19/20 on such terms and conditions as may be determined by it."

Interestingly, the "Statement of objects and reasons" of the bill remained silent for the reasons and need for the appointment of the bureaucrats as chairmen of educational boards.

*Deputy speaker refers the document to standing committee concerned for deliberation*

It, however, said the educational boards in the province were working without formalised platform for coordination among their respective chairmen and the absence of such coordination had resulted in significant disparities in examination standards, assessment procedures and other administrative functions in the boards in Sindh.

The statement of objects and reasons said: "In order to fill the gap of coordination amongst the chairmen of all the educational boards in the province and for the purpose of performing the functions in the educational boards in smooth and transparent manner, it is expedient to amend the Sindh Boards of Intermediate and Secondary Education Ordinance, 1972."

The standing committee was asked to examine the amendment bill and present its proposals in a week.

Besides the appointment of boards' chairmen, the bill also envisaged changes in the procedure for appointing heads, examination directors and secretaries of the education boards in the province.

Under the amended law, the controlling authority of the education boards will be the chief minister or his nominated minister. The authority of the education boards will be authorised to dismiss the officer from service at any stage.

As per the amended bill, the chief minister will be authorised to make appointments to the education boards directly or through transfer.

The authority to appoint members to the education boards and the steering committee will also rest with the chief minister.

The administrative affairs of the education boards will be supervised by a steering committee and an officer from the provincial services and general administration department will also be included in the committee.

### **MQM-P protest**

The proceedings took an unpleasant turn when the deputy speaker ruled a privilege motion of Aamir Siddiqui belonging to the Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P) out of order after the law and parliamentary affairs minister opposed it.



The MQM-P member in his motion complained against the “unprofessional” conduct of Karachi Water and Sewerage Corporation Managing Director Asadullah who did not take his calls or reply to his messages.

He said that he knew his privilege motion would be rejected, but at least he must be allowed to take up the issue of acute water shortage in the entire district East.

The MQM-P members rose and chanted slogans against the government as the speaker ruled the privilege motion out of order.

Meanwhile, journalists covering the assembly proceedings staged a protest against the recent amendment to the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (Peca).

Later, the house was adjourned to Wednesday (tomorrow) at 2pm.

(By Tahir Siddiqui Dawn, 13, 28/01/2025)

### **Govt has ‘improved’ process for appointing VCs, says Sharjeel**

Sindh Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon has said that the process for appointing vice chancellors of public sector universities has been improved in accordance with the decision of the provincial cabinet.

“The new approach allows not only teachers but also professor, retired professionals and experts in the relevant field to be considered as candidates for the position of vice chancellor. While professors can still be appointed as VC, the criteria have now been broadened to include more options,” he said while speaking at a press conference on Monday.

He highlighted that former VCs of Sindh University, such as Allama I.I Kazi, Mazharul Haq Siddiqui, Nisar Siddiqui, and Mehran University’s Muzaffar Shah, were bureaucrats, who were appointed as VCs.

He noted that the number of universities in Sindh had increased from eight to 30 by the PPP government.

Urging all stakeholders to cooperate with the Sindh government, he said that a professor can certainly become a VC, but “if a better candidate can be found among administrative experts, they too have been given a chance”.

Commenting on a businessman’s remarks during a meeting with Federal Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal asking him to send Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz to Sindh, he said: “I would like to clarify that Punjab is also our province, and motorways are being developed there. However, I must point out that federal governments have predominantly been led by parties from Punjab, and their focus has largely been on developing motorways in that province.

“Meanwhile, Sindh has experienced significant neglect in terms of effective motorway infrastructure, a concern we have consistently raised. We have documented the disparities in federal projects allocated to Sindh and other provinces. If we are to compare the performance of chief ministers, we should consider their contributions to different mega projects,” he said.

In response to a question, Mr Memon stated that the home minister and the inspector general of police had already provided a clarification regarding the issue of some Chinese citizens who moved the Sindh High Court. “We value the safety of Chinese citizens more than our own lives. Some standard operating procedures have been established regarding security, and we want everyone to adhere to these SOPs,” he said.

Meanwhile, Mr Memon called on PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari at the Bilawal House. During the meeting, political and administrative affairs of the province were discussed.

(By Dawn Reporter, 13, 28/01/2025)

### **Civil society joins varsity teachers’ protest as boycott continues**

Teachers’ struggle against the government move to appoint bureaucrats as vice chancellors of public sector institutions of higher learning gained more momentum on Tuesday when representatives of civil society joined faculty members from universities across the province outside the Karachi Press Club and held a demonstration.

They were joined by students and representatives of Sindh Professors and Lecturers Association (SPLA), Federal Urdu University of Arts, Science and Technology (FUUAST), the University of Karachi, Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) and Karachi Bar Association.

The protest was organised by the Federation of All Pakistan Universities Academic Staff Association (Fapusa)-Sindh chapter.

Addressing the gathering, teachers and rights activists unequivocally condemned the government for “undermining the autonomy of educational institutions by attempting to impose non-academics in leadership roles”.

They said such amendments and policies represent “a blatant attack” on academic freedom and institutional integrity.

They also regretted a recent statement by the chief minister in which he justified the government move, while expressing his inability to remove some vice chancellors facing allegations of sexual harassment and corruption. They questioned the performance of bureaucrats and said there was not a single department where their performance could be declared as satisfactory. “The provincial government’s policies for the heads of educational boards and universities are simply unacceptable. They will further deteriorate academic standards,” said Munawwar Abbas representing SPLA, while referring to the bill tabled a day earlier in the assembly for appointing bureaucrats as head of educational boards.

In his remarks, Dr Tausif Ahmed Khan, retired associate professor of FUUAST, said: "What's happening right now is not expected of the Pakistan Peoples Party government. Unfortunately, the autonomous status of the universities including powers of the vice chancellor has severely been curtailed by changing the relevant law over the years.

The federally-run universities, he pointed out, fared no better where retired teachers had been deprived of their pensions for five months.

In his remarks, HRCP vice chairperson Sindh region Qazi Khizar urged the government to consult teachers, the key stakeholders in the relevant crisis, before tabling the amendment on the floor of the provincial assembly.

"The government alone is responsible for the mess in universities as it makes all key appointments. Its admission of failure in not removing the vice chancellors facing allegations demonstrates its own weakness," he said.

On the proposed amendment, Mr Khizar questioned how the government could appoint bureaucrats as head of universities when there is a set academic and research criteria for teachers to meet for appointment and later promotion.

On behalf of the KBA, vice president of the bar association Advocate Kazim Hussain Mahesar extended full support to Fapusa and said the association stood behind the teachers and would help them in their struggle.

The speakers included Fapusa President Dr Ikhtiar Ghumro, Dr Mohsin Ali of Karachi University Teachers' Society and Abdul Rehman Nangraj representing Fapusa.

Later, the teachers held a meeting and announced to hold a nationwide "black day" this Thursday.

The association also announced its decision to file a petition challenging the legality of the proposed amendment/s and resolved to continue the boycott of academic activities till Friday. A follow-up meeting has been scheduled for Saturday.  
(By Faiza Ilyas Dawn, 13, 29/01/2025)

### '92% of education budget spent on salaries'

Stakeholders agreed on Saturday on the need to redefine education as a means of protection, both in its creation and use. They were speaking at a youth conference on 'Challenges and Solutions for 21st Century Youth,' organised by the Sindh Sports and Youth Affairs Department.



Education Minister Syed Sardar Ali Shah said that education should be seen as a source of security. "Education instills a sense of protection. We want to make it a source of security for everyone. Only when our youth feel secure can they rise above discrimination and work toward protecting others," he added.

The minister pointed to systemic issues within the education sector, including outdated policies and a lack of prioritisation by the state. "The root cause of these issues lies in the outdated policies of the state, where education was never truly prioritized," he added. "During pro-democracy movements, there were deliberate efforts to undermine Sindh's education system. Even today, we continue to fight for constitutional rights."

Minister Shah referred to the disproportionate budgetary allocations for education in Sindh, stating that 92% is spent on salaries and operational costs, leaving only 2% for developmental projects. He acknowledged the province's shortcomings but called on society to take collective responsibility. "We all need to play our part," he added.

Shah also touched on the issue of population growth and its impact on education. He criticised the lack of seriousness regarding population control, noting that 25 million children are currently paying for their education, while an equal number are out of school.

"It is tragic that we lack accurate statistics, and we only address our problems much later," he said, also pointing to the devastating impact of climate change. "Rains and floods in Sindh have destroyed 20,000 schools. Although the federal government has agreed to help rehabilitate these schools, the process will take three years, and only 4,000 schools are expected to be restored in that time."

Despite these challenges, Minister Shah outlined some of the progress made in Sindh's education system. "We have introduced significant reforms, including the first-ever teaching licence policy and the recruitment of over 60,000 teachers on merit. We are also integrating technical education alongside the traditional system and establishing 3,000 centers for non-formal, technical, and vocational education for out-of-school children."

Other panelists also offered their insights. Sadiqa Salahuddin, Executive Director of the Indus Resource Centre, praised the protection of girls' education in Sindh but stressed the need to further promote a sense of security. "Parents want to educate their children, and better results can be achieved by minimizing resource misuse and ensuring accountability," she said.

Intellectual Jami Chandio criticised the state's reduction of education to mere knowledge transfer, which he argued has discouraged critical thinking and contributed to the rise of extremism. "In the 21st century, education itself is security," he added. "We talk about a security state, yet we are the most insecure ourselves."  
(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter, The Express Tribune, 03, 02/02/2025)

### Teachers reject varsity amendment law, announce two-day boycott

The Federation of All Pakistan Universities Academic Staff Associations (Fapusa)-Sindh chapter has strongly condemned the recently passed Sindh Universities and Institutes Laws (Amendment) Bill and announced a complete two-day boycott of academic activities next week.

According to the new law, any bureaucrat holding a master's degree can be appointed as a vice chancellor at any university.

"It's a dark day in the history of Sindh's universities. The amendments aim to place universities under complete political control, prioritising political appointments over education, research and academic freedom," said Dr Ikhtiar Ghumro, who heads Fapusa-Sindh and chaired the meeting.

He added that the association would continue its protest until the law was repealed.

In a statement, the association asserted that the new law, passed without consultation, was an attempt to dismantle universities' autonomy and undermine their core values.

"Fapusa members expressed concern that while governments in civilised societies respect the opinions of academicians, the Sindh government has adopted an authoritarian approach, disregarding faculty concerns," the statement read.

It also criticised the provincial government's deteriorating performance in education, healthcare, infrastructure and public services. The association further stated that instead of accepting responsibility for their failures and poor governance, provincial ministers were now threatening to close universities.

The members decided to hold a massive protest march in front of the Sindh Assembly and initiate legal action against the amendments soon.

(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter, Dawn, 13, 02/02/2025)

### Free meal scheme launched at govt school

The longstanding plans to introduce free meals in public schools of Sindh had remained a virtual pipe dream until now. However, students at Allama Iqbal Government Boys and Girls Primary and Secondary School, situated at the junction of Sohrab Goth and Federal B Area, have started receiving free meals daily during their morning break - thanks to Saylani Welfare, a charitable organisation.

According to the school principal, the initiative gathered pace after the Sindh government entrusted the school's management to MQM-P MPA Adil Askari. Since then, students have been provided with a variety of nutritious meals, including chicken rolls, biryani, nihari, kebabs, and dal chawal, ensuring a diverse menu every day. The food is either served on traditional dastar-khwans or distributed in an organised queue system.

This initiative comes at a crucial time, as Sindh Education Minister Syed Sardar Shah recently announced plans to roll out meal distributions in select schools starting from the new academic session in April.

During a visit on Tuesday morning, this scribe saw students enjoying their chicken rolls, their faces lit up with joy. "Every day, I go home and excitedly tell my family what I ate at school," one student told The Express Tribune. Another student expressed her commitment to education, saying that the meal program has motivated her to attend school regularly.

The school currently accommodates around 1,900 students in its morning shift. Principal Dr Abdul Razzaq Sialvi spoke about how the free meal program has improved attendance rates. "Many students who were previously irregular now come to school daily," he observed.

He said food insecurity remains a harsh reality for many families, compelling children to work alongside their parents to make ends meet. However, now, an increasing number of parents are enrolling their children.

(By The Express Tribune, 04, 05/02/2025)

### Students heave sigh of relief as university teachers set to resume classes today in Sindh

Students of public sector universities across Sindh, who have suffered the most due to the government-teachers stand-off over a controversial law, heaved a sigh of relief on Wednesday when the Federation of All Pakistan Universities Academic Staff Association (Fapusa) decided to "resume" classes from Thursday (today).

While holding the Sindh government responsible for the academic loss of thousands of students, the association said the "decision to temporarily resume activities indicate teachers' sincerity towards education".

Teachers belonging to Fapusa had boycotted for more than two weeks academic activities at 17 institutions of higher learning in Sindh and staged protest demos against a controversial law that allowed the provincial government to appoint bureaucrats as vice chancellors of public sector universities.

The teachers resorted to a strike on Jan 16 following a decision of the provincial cabinet to change the criteria for appointment of vice chancellors and allow non-PhD bureaucrats to head universities. Later, the ruling Pakistan Peoples Party used its numeric strength in the Sindh Assembly to get passed the controversial amendment to the universities' law last week despite strong opposition.

**'A new phase of resistance'**

On Wednesday, the Sindh chapter of Fapusa held an online meeting that took several key decisions to sustain the public and the media pressure on the government.

Sources said that these steps included challenging the "the unconstitutional law" in court and holding boycotts of MPAs, ministers, and bureaucrats from the ruling party at every level.

"Every visit of these officials to universities will be observed as a black day to protest their anti-education policies," shared Fapusa-Sindh president Dr Ikhtiar Ali Ghumro.

Describing the new mode of protest as a strategic shift in teachers' struggle, he said: "From tomorrow [Thursday], our struggle will mark a new phase of resistance, where teachers will conduct classes by wearing black armbands every day. Every lecture will include awareness sessions on the catastrophic implications of this amendment."

The teachers, he said, also decided to suspend all academic activities at 12 noon on Feb 11. They would organise protests rallies in their respective universities, he added.

"We will be engaging national and international academic bodies to expose the Sindh government's assault on higher education. There will be general body meetings in coming weeks in Karachi, Hyderabad, and Khairpur to further mobilise faculty and students," he said.

The association would also hold press conferences, protests and rallies across Sindh while its central body would be asked to observe another 'black day' in coming days in universities across the country, he added.

On behalf of the association, he regretted students' loss due to teachers' strike and said the decision to temporarily resume activities indicate teachers' sincerity towards education.

**Teachers regret academic loss**

On behalf of the association, Dr Ghumro regretted students' loss due to teachers' strike and said the decision to temporarily resume activities indicate teachers' sincerity towards education.

"However, the Sindh government has shown zero concern for students' education, refusing to negotiate despite clear warnings. Our protest is not a war or competition but a principled stand against unjust decisions. We have chosen to boycott academic activities as a last resort to draw attention to the grave implications of these amendments," he argued.

Unlike the Sindh government, which held the administrative power and control over university vice chancellors and funding, the tools of academicians were dialogue, discourse, and peaceful protest, he said.

In a press statement, the association once again "vehemently" opposed the recent amendments to the Sindh Universities and Institutes Law (Amendment) Act 2025.

"These amendments, which permit the appointment of non-academic bureaucrats as vice chancellors pose a grave threat to the autonomy of educational institutions and undermine the principles of autonomous governance, academic freedom, and intellectual excellence in Sindh's higher education sector," it said.

(By Faiza Ilyas, Dawn, 13, 06/02/2025)

**University teachers call off boycott, classes resume today**

The teachers of public sector universities in Sindh have decided to call off their boycott of classes from February 6, but their protest against the provincial government's controversial reforms regarding the appointment of vice chancellors will continue.

In a statement issued on Wednesday, Abdul Rehman Nangraj, General Secretary of the Sindh chapter of the Federation of All Pakistan Universities Academic Staff Association (FAPUASA), announced a shift in their protest strategy.

"We acknowledge that the prolonged boycott has disrupted students' education, and we deeply regret the academic setbacks they have faced," he said, emphasising that despite their efforts, the government has remained indifferent to their concerns.

While classes will resume, teachers will persist in their demonstration by wearing black armbands and raising awareness among students about the negative repercussions of the newly enacted legislation. The amendment, they argue, allows bureaucrats — who lack academic and research experience — to assume the role of vice chancellors, imperiling the autonomy of universities.

The teachers have resolved to boycott visits from ministers, MPAs, and bureaucrats to their campuses. They also plan to engage with national and international academic institutions to mount pressure on the provincial government to reconsider the legislation. Nangraj revealed that legal action against the amendment is also under consideration.

The protesting faculty contends that appointing bureaucrats as university heads will not only undermine academic freedom and excellence but also expose universities to increased political interference. "This legal move seems to be part of a broader strategy to suppress critical thinking and dissent within academic institutions," Nangraj asserted. He further stated that university autonomy is globally recognised as a key factor in academic progress and innovation.

The Sindh Assembly passed the Sindh Universities and Institutes Law (Amendment) Act, 2025, on February 1, despite strong opposition from academic circles, including the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan. In response, university teachers promptly launched their protest, initially boycotting classes to voice their dissent.

Although they have now resumed academic activities, their resistance against the law remains unwavering, signaling an ongoing struggle for the independence of higher education institutions in the province.  
(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter, The Express Tribune, 04, 06/02/2025)

### **Sindh teachers call for unity to fight universities amendment law**

Highlighting their reservations over the recent amendment to the universities' law that allows bureaucrats to head institutions of higher learning, teachers at a seminar held at Karachi University (KU) on Thursday were of the shared opinion that there was still hope for a positive change if unity was demonstrated on campuses and students were engaged in the struggle against the controversial law.

The speakers emphasised the need for creating awareness about the key features of the controversial law and how it would affect the institution of the vice chancellor office, teachers and students.

The provincial government, they said, had already destroyed institutions of schools and colleges and was now after universities to ruin what's left on campuses.

"We fear that the corruption-tainted bureaucracy will destroy university education. It seems that the provincial government wants to take control of funds and assets of universities and destroy them," said Dr Kamran Zakria heading NED University Teachers' Association, while citing examples of PIA and Pakistan Steel Mills.

*Emphasise need to engage students, create awareness about controversial legislation that allows bureaucrats to become VCs*

Under the amendment, he said, a cadre officer of BPS-21 or above from the department of police, district management group or provincial management service (having bachelor's degree in engineering and master's degree in any discipline from a Higher Education Commission-recognised institution) could be appointed vice chancellor.

"There was absolutely no justification to bring this controversial law. The government says that the new law would help "run the universities smoothly" but doesn't explain what exactly hindered it to fix the problems on campuses. All key appointments on campuses are made by the government," he said.

Munawar Abbas and Rasul Qazi, both representing the Sindh Professors and Lecturers Association (SPLA), urged teachers not to lose hope in the face of adversity and demonstrate unity.

"This fight is not about saving the vice chancellors or teachers. What is at stake is our academic institutions and future of our students. This fire would spread and destroy all academic institutions, from educational boards to universities," warned Mr Abbas, while underscoring the need for creating awareness about what he described as the disastrous consequences of the new law.

The speakers condemned the "derogatory remarks" of the Sindh chief minister about some vice chancellors and said it didn't suit him to make such statements. The government was solely responsible for the mess on campuses as it made all key appointments, they said.

Dr Syed Shahabuddin of Federal Urdu University of Arts, Science and Technology and Dr Maroof Bin Rauf of Karachi University Teachers' Society also spoke at the event organised by Tanzeem-i-Asatazah Pakistan.

(By Faiza Ilyas Dawn, 13, 07/02/2025)

### **Why homework?**

RECENTLY, a parent made some interesting observations about his seven-year old child's way of doing homework. It was noted that the child happily did what interested her but had to be cajoled into doing what did not appeal to her. The parent questioned whether one homework could work for all the students.



It would not be humanly possible for any teacher to satisfy the varying levels of learning and the diverse interests of all her students. Given the assembly line pattern of our education system, which requires every student to be treated uniformly, every child is fitted into a straitjacket irrespective of her individuality. Many parents who care for their offspring are now seeking an answer to this dilemma.

The first question that should be asked is, why is a child required to spend nearly a quarter of her waking hours studying and learning from books and writing in her exercise copies. Here, I am referring to young children in primary schools, who are generally under 10 years of age. I decided to investigate. I asked a primary school teacher if she gave homework to her students.

The question itself shocked her. She then explained that she had to give homework to her students after she had taught them something new and then wanted to confirm that they had understood it fully. It also served to help them revise what they had been taught in class.

*A child teaches herself with the help of her own experience and exploration.*

It was my turn to be shocked. Obviously, she had no idea about a child's learning process. She perceived it as the 'knowledge' a teacher poured into the child's brain as one pours water from a jug into a glass. But that is not how a child learns. She teaches herself with the help of her own experience and exploration. At a young age, it is the multisensory experience that gives her what we refer to as knowledge. Her spontaneous exploration helps her reconstruct her psychic powers. This is not transferred verbally, and once a child acquires it, she never forgets it. Neither does she have to revise it in the shape of homework again and again.



to ensure that it is retained. Moreover, children are versatile and their development is diverse. That explains why some children are interested in one thing while others are bored by that.

These are some basic facts of nature that we must never tamper with. If we violate the natural rules and impose questionable, man-made rules on the child, she will react and never develop an interest in learning. If a teacher feels that a child needs to do homework to remember what she has been taught, it is the teacher and her pedagogy that need to be investigated.

It is universally known that play is the major tool of learning for a young child. How many schools have playgrounds, and how many have teaching material with which a child learns fast and effectively? Unfortunately, not enough emphasis is placed on physical exercise, which is absolutely essential for the development of the child's brain.

Under Sister Zinia Pinto's stewardship, the primary section of Karachi's St Joseph's Convent did not give any homework worth the name and no exams were held. Children were happy, well-adjusted and learned a lot without being forced to study what the teacher wanted them to learn. Above all, Sister Zinia insisted on giving the child choices, which ensured that she enjoyed what she did.

Here are some words to convince our educators and parents, for whom the West is the ideal example for a child's education. I asked my grandchildren if they had to do homework when they were in primary school. The one in Canada thought for a while and then told me she got a homework assignment once a week and was given a week to complete and submit it. How long did it take her to complete it? "Not more than 10 or 15 minutes," she told me. The granddaughter in the UK informed me that Monday was homework day. They were given new questions to answer and given a week to complete their work. They had to submit it on the following Monday. No one complained of the workload.

Are our children not intelligent enough to learn without struggling with homework every day? Is there a problem with our teachers? Or is our system faulty in some way?

Another factor that comes in the way of natural learning of the child is the language used as the medium of instruction. If an alien language is thrust upon the child with which she is not familiar, her psychic reconstruction will be affected. In that case, self-learning becomes difficult. The only option available to her then is rote learning, which inevitably requires repetitive practice. Hence the need for homework.

(By Zubeida Mustafa Dawn, 07/02/2025)

### **Matric, inter certificate verification goes online**

Inter-Boards Coordination Commission (IBCC), the institution responsible for verifying matriculation and intermediate certificates nationwide, has abolished the traditional process of sending certificates through sealed envelopes.

Instead, it has introduced a digitalised system, enabling verification of certificates from 29 education boards across the country based on online data and portal sharing.

The attestation of matriculation and intermediate documents will now be done based on this digital verification. This system will be implemented from February 16 for education boards nationwide and for students pursuing matriculation and intermediate studies. It is to be noted that IBCC attestation is mandatory for students going abroad.

IBCC Director Dr Ghulam Ali Mullah told The Express Tribune that IBCC has taken this step to enhance efficiency in the document verification process and has made significant changes in the verification stage of certificates from boards for attestation. He mentioned that there were complaints about candidates submitting sealed envelopes with attested documents, which were later found to be fake, and the educational boards did not verify them.

Traditionally, students were required to submit documents in sealed envelopes attested by the respective board to verify their documents from IBCC. Recognising the need for modernisation, IBCC has digitalised this process, eliminating the need for sealed envelopes.

(By Saifdar Rizvi The Express Tribune, 04, 11/02/2025)

### **Sindh to probe use of 'fake' domiciles by non-local students for medical college admissions**

While the opposition Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P) sought superior judiciary's intervention regarding reports that more than 100 "non-local" students had used Karachi domiciles to get admissions into the city's medical colleges, the Sindh government, responsible for issuing domicile and permanent residence certificates, denied any wrongdoing and vowed to conduct a thorough investigation.

According to reports, more than 100 students, said to have passed their matric and intermediate exams either from Punjab, Islamabad or other districts of Sindh, got admission into Karachi's medical colleges on the basis of the local domicile that they reportedly obtained illegally. That deprived those students who are permanent residents of the city's seven districts.

The issue came to light when senior officials of the Liaquat University of Medical & Health Sciences, which is responsible for finalising the merit list of Sindh medical colleges, randomly searched the computerised national identity card (CNIC) numbers of some students and found that they already possessed the domicile of Punjab but got admission into medical colleges in Sindh on the basis of Karachi domicile.

As the opposition held the Sindh government responsible and demanded the apex court to take suo motu notice, a senior Pakistan Peoples Party leader, who also represents the Sindh government as the head of the powerful Chief Minister's Inspection Committee (CMIT), shrugged off the allegations and announced an inquiry.



"We will definitely hold an inquiry and seek details from all relevant offices and institutions," Special Assistant to Chief Minister (SACM) Senator Waqar Mehdi told *Dawn*. "It's a very serious allegation and one must fix it if there's any wrongdoing involved."

He said that the CM team would look into the alleged reports. The team, he said, would gather every piece of evidence, physically visit the places under question and look into every possible angle that helps connecting the dots.

"Usually we try to complete the job within couple of weeks but sometimes the response from the institutions concerned and relevant details take time to emerge. Whatever it takes, we would try our best to reach the logical end," added Senator Mehdi.

#### **Muttahida condemns 'injustice to Karachi students'**

The situation drew strong reaction from the opposition MQM-P which appealed to the chief justice of Pakistan to take a suo motu action on the allegations "to provide justice to the students of Karachi."

"Once again, open injustice is being done to the students of Karachi," the party said in a statement. "The plan to give the reserved quota for Karachi students in medical colleges to interior Sindh has been successfully executed. Fake domiciles are being created to legalise illegal acts. In universities across the country, students from the local district and city are given admission on a preferential basis."

It said that Karachi has become the only city where non-local students are being admitted on a preferential basis but "corrupt and feudal mindset of the PPP government" is defying all set rules and regulations.

"The MQM-Pakistan demands that the chief justice of Pakistan take suo motu action to provide justice to the students of Karachi," it added.

The reports said that a significant number of fake domicile certificates in Karachi were issued from the city's East district, with many students having completed their matriculation and intermediate from other cities. It said that some students initially held Punjab domicile certificates, only to later exchange them for Sindh certificates.

It says that online domicile verification system in Punjab has made it easier to identify these fraudulent documents, whereas Sindh's manual system has created challenges in verifying the legitimacy of dual certificates.

As a result, students from other provinces and federal areas have gained admission to medical colleges in Karachi, while local students are being denied entry due to the provincial government's stringent domicile policy, said the report.

(By Imran Ayub Dawn, 13, 11/02/2025)

#### **Student develops Sindhi calculator**

A 16-year-old student from Karachi, Mahrose Zufran, has developed Pakistan's first Sindhi-language calculator with the help of artificial intelligence (AI).

A student of Karachi's AI enabled, Rehan Allahwala School, Mahrose said she developed the gadget with an aim to benefit the Sindh speaking business community.

The AI-driven school equipped with modern technology is designed not only provides education to students but also teaches them the skill of earning. The stationary items including books, pencils are not used in the school. Instead, it follows a modern educational model, where artificial intelligence and smart devices have replaced conventional learning materials. Every student is encouraged to explore new ideas at their own pace and according to their interests.

Speaking to The Express Tribune Mahrose said a large section of population of province communicate Sindhi language only. Therefore, keeping in mind their needs, Mahrose said she has designed the calculator in Sindhi language.

She also stated that the calculator could be commercialised for broader use if she gets financial support.

Mahrose said that in today's world, acquiring skills was more valuable than merely earning a degree. Despite young age, she was already earning in dollars and managed an online channel. Mahrose urged the youth to prioritise skill development over solely focusing on academic degrees.

Aspiring to become a public speaker, she has received awards from Russian Cultural and Science Center and won various declamation competitions.

Rehan Allahwala School Vice-Principal Rubab Fatima, while talking to The Express Tribune, said that the school not only provides education but also teaches online earnings skills. Additionally, the school conducts four-hour classes a week for students' parents to help them understand the curriculum.

(By Ayesha Khan Ansari The Express Tribune, 04, 11/02/2025)

#### **Governor Tessori refuses assent to varsities bill, returns it to Sindh Assembly**

The Sindh government's move to enable bureaucrats to become vice chancellors of universities across the province suffered a major blow on Tuesday when the governor withheld the assent to the controversial Sindh Universities and Institutes Laws (Amendment) Bill and returned it to the provincial assembly for reconsideration.

Raising objections to the section enabling a cadre officer of BPS-21 or above to be appointed as VC in any university of Sindh, Governor Kamran Tessori returned the bill to the assembly and said that, according to the clear directives of the Federal Higher Education Commission (HEC), a vice-chancellor must be an academican.

He further stated that other provinces were also adhering to these HEC guidelines.

The governor asserted that individuals holding PhD degrees possess deep expertise in academic leadership, research, and administrative matters.

*Says under HEC directives, a vice chancellor must be an academician*

He pointed out that appointing bureaucrats as vice-chancellors did not align with the academic and research standards required for higher education institutions. "Bureaucrats lack a thorough understanding of the educational needs of students, faculty members, and researchers," he added.

Mr Tessori urged the provincial assembly to reconsider the raised objections to ensure that the leadership of universities remains in the hands of qualified academicians, adding that appointment of bureaucrats did not meet the academic standards.

He said that the bureaucrats could not fully understand the academic needs of students, faculties and researchers.

Amid strong protest by all three opposition parties — the Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan, Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf-backed Sunni Ittehad Council and Jamaat-i-Islami — the Pakistan Peoples Party had on Jan 31 got passed the Sindh Universities and Institutes Laws (Amendment) Bill.

Besides political parties, the associations of lecturers and professors and civil rights campaigners have also strongly opposed the government's move to appoint bureaucrats as VCs of universities.

Under Article 116 of the Constitution, a bill passed by the provincial assembly shall be presented to the governor for assent.

As per the Section (2) (b) of the Article, if the bill is returned to the provincial assembly by the governor "with a message requesting that the Bill, or any specified provision thereof, be reconsidered and that any amendment specified in the message be considered".

The Section 3 of the Article says: "When the Governor has returned a Bill to the Provincial Assembly it shall be reconsidered by the Provincial Assembly and, if it is again passed, with or without amendment, by the Provincial Assembly, by the votes of the majority of the members of the Provincial Assembly present and voting, it shall be again presented to the Governor and the Governor shall not withhold assent therefrom."

(By Tahir Siddiqui Dawn, 13, 12/02/2025)

### **MQM-P slams govt for 'closing door to education for Karachiites'**

The Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P) on Tuesday demanded that only those students who had completed their matriculation and intermediate from Karachi be given admissions to professional colleges and universities in the metropolis.

Speaking at a press conference here, senior party leader Dr Farooq Sattar accused the Sindh government of the Pakistan Peoples Party of "deliberately closing the door of professional education" for the students hailing from Karachi by developing an "organised mechanism in the name of domicile".

"Around 50 per cent of seats are being offered to students from other areas, whereas 90pc of these seats rightfully belong to the students of Karachi. Everyone is allowed to come and get a domicile whenever they want. The political parties of the country should stand up with the youth of Karachi to stop this injustice."

He stressed that the number of seats in medical and engineering colleges should be increased according to the population and the system of admissions to these colleges should be further simplified.

"The straightforward solution to this issue is to abolish the domicile requirement and only those students who have passed their matriculation and intermediate exams from Karachi, with a residential address in the city, should be considered. This will put an end to the ongoing fraud being perpetrated under the guise of domicile," he said.

### **Sharjeel rejects allegations**

Sindh Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon has categorically rejected the MQM's allegations, stating that "MQM members are engaging in the politics of accusations to divert the public's attention from their internal contradictions".

In a statement, he said that the MQM-P leaders were constantly instigating the "politics of hatred, prejudice, division, and deception, but the people of Karachi have come to know the truth about the MQM and are no longer going to be deceived".

"The children of Karachi are also our children. The people know who provided guns instead of books to the children of Karachi," he said.

(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter, Dawn, 01, 12/02/2025)

### **NED developing 1st AI-driven car**

The National Centre for Artificial Intelligence at NED University of Engineering and Technology has embarked on a trailblazer project to develop the country's first AI-powered driverless car. As per university engineers, no other institution in the country is currently working on such a cutting-edge autonomous vehicle technology.

A special EV car has been imported from China for the project and is now being equipped with advanced AI tools to transform it into a driverless vehicle, with the first test drive scheduled to take place within the next six months.

Project Director Associate Professor Dr Muhammad Khurram claimed that the university is close to achieving real-time vehicle control. He spoke about the progress made in data processing and software development, bringing the project closer to reality. "If successful, the driverless car is expected to be operational on the NED University campus within the stated timeframe," he told The Express Tribune.

Research students Inzamam and Aleema, who are contributing to the project, explained that the initiative integrates AI, robotics, and mapping to enable the vehicle to navigate complex traffic scenarios. The team has already developed and tested algorithms for speed limits, object detection, and lane recognition in a virtual simulation. Currently, work is underway to enhance signal light recognition and steering control, ensuring the car's seamless functionality in real-world conditions.

The National Centre for Artificial Intelligence at NED University is among nine research centres established by the federal government to promote innovation and technological advancements in Pakistan.  
(By Saddar Rizvi The Express Tribune, 04, 13/02/2025)

### Girls' education

A RECENTLY held conference in Islamabad on the aforesaid subject is a valuable move to address the appalling condition of girls' education in most Muslim societies. The conclusion of Clandon and his colleagues' study of Muslim societies (2018) tells us what is obvious, that "at the global level, Muslim women are less educated and have wider gender gaps than all other religious groups. ..." This is a predictable conclusion, given our perceptions and attitude towards education.



This is regrettable because we claim that education is an integral part of our faith. Yet it seems that the appeal to religion for literacy has not always helped. If it had, most Muslim countries should have been ahead of other nations. We do not hear non-Muslim communities begging parents to educate their girls. Education today is essential to survive in a competitive world. It is said that weakness invites aggression, and anybody today not armed with education is a very weak person indeed! If knowledge is power, the knowledgeable are invincible in a knowledge society.

I am inclined to think that often, the need and necessity of the times push people to seek education. I want to cite an example to demonstrate the point. Hunza valley was very backward till around the 1970s, girls' schools being non-existent. But when the late Prince Karim Aga Khan started establishing girls' schools (although boys' schools existed since the 1940s) in the 1980s, that is when girls started attending schools.

A famous slogan inspired the local community. It had been given by Aga Khan III, grandfather of Prince Karim. He had urged his community that if a couple had two children — a girl and a boy — and if they were able to educate only one, educate the girl!

He had argued that if you educate the girl, she would educate the whole family. The boy can survive by doing even menial jobs, but an educated girl is an asset to the family. This guidance inspired the community but it took some time before schools were established due to the financial constraints of the time.

*If you educate the girl, she'll educate the whole family.*

However, the actual impetus for girls' education came when girls engaged in gainful employment after receiving higher education. When their family fortunes improved, others were inspired to send their girls to school despite cultural barriers. Today, there are many young women professionals, doctors, nurses, PhD scholars, police and public administrators in rural and urban Pakistan.

Many have even moved overseas for better opportunities. Today, education, in that area, is not necessarily only a religious duty but a basic human need to survive. They are now in an envious position as they live with dignity and respect with a better quality of life. The community provided an 'enabling environment', which provided stimulus for girls to excel.

Coming to the larger picture of girls' education, the 'enabling environment' that is being talked about is largely missing. In fact, disabling factors abound in Pakistan. Studies show that some of the primary disabling factors include the pathetic state of schools, lack of basic facilities, such as washrooms, absence of electricity and lack of security, especially for girls. Ansari and Ali (2024) of the Aga Khan University cite security of school buildings (no boundary wall), as one of the major factors standing in the way of girls' education. In addition, lack of educational materials, boring and irrelevant curricula, shortage of teachers, bad teaching methods, corporal punishment, absence of libraries and other learning materials, are other disabling factors.

As an educator at a private university for many years, working with heads of schools and district education officers, I am inclined to believe that all stakeholders — not just the government — parents, community leaders, and particularly women, need to be involved in making sure they create an enabling environment for all children to go to, and come back from, school with dignity.

Apparently, in some tribal societies, girls' education has been perceived as being against Islam, but to me, this is more a cultural and tribal pretext, rather than a religious issue. In most tribal or conservative societies, women are seen as less than human, and their education is perceived to be least rewarding, in fact, detrimental, to the tribal way of life. Yet those who move to urban societies start sending their children to educational institutions. Environment does make a difference.

In conclusion, the basic disabling factors cited above need to be addressed. We need to find more out-of-the-box solutions. Both top-down and bottom-up approaches must be tested. It is an unending struggle, but we have no other choice.  
(By Jan-e-Alam Khaki Dawn, 07, 14/02/2025)

### Grace marks proposed for 1st year students who failed in exams

The fact-finding committee established by the Sindh Assembly to scrutinise the results of the Board of Intermediate Education Karachi (BIEK) has recommended the grant of grace marks to the first year students who failed in the annual exams.

A detailed report submitted by the committee to Education Minister Sardar Ali Shah provides an analysis of the results, the evaluation process, and the overall academic status of the BIEK and affiliated colleges. The committee recommended the grant of grace marks, ranging from 15 to 20 per cent, to first-year students who failed in the exam.

The committee also proposed a review of the results from other education boards in the province. Sources within the Sindh government said that the relevant assembly committee will soon make a decision based on the findings of this report. The decision will influence the participation of first-year students in the annual examinations, scheduled to begin on April 15.

The committee was tasked with investigating the unexpected low BIEK results, where less than 30% of students passed. The committee was headed by Dr Sarosh Lodhi, VC of NED University.

The committee invited a group of 20 students who failed the first-year exam despite achieving A1 grades in their Matriculation exams. Only five of these students appeared, accompanied by their parents. The students' exam copies were examined in front of their parents, where it was noted that some students made basic errors, such as writing "Karachi" with a "C" instead of a "K."

The committee's report laid bare several issues with the assessment process, including errors in totaling marks, and problems in the tabulation and data entry stages. The committee questioned the disparity in results between Karachi and other boards, especially given that the syllabus and government-appointed teaching staff are uniform across the region.

The committee suggested awarding additional marks in certain subjects: 15% for Physics and Mathematics, and up to 20% for Chemistry. However, grace marks were not recommended for Zoology, Botany, Islamic Studies, or Pakistan Studies.  
(By Safdar Rizvi The Express Tribune, 04, 16/02/2025)

### Sindh cabinet rejects governor's objection, passes varsities bill again

Rejecting the governor's objections to the Sindh Universities and Institutes Laws (Amendment) Bill that enabled non-PhD bureaucrats to be appointed as vice chancellors of universities across the province, the Sindh cabinet on Saturday once again approved the controversial bill in its original form and referred it to the provincial assembly for legislation.

Briefing journalists about the cabinet meeting, Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon said that the cabinet had rejected the governor's objections and decided to again present the bill in the provincial assembly on Monday, where it would be re-approved due to numeric majority of the ruling Pakistan Peoples Party.

Sindh Governor Kamran Tessori had refused to grant his assent to the bill and returned it to the provincial assembly for reconsideration, raising objections to the new law that expanded the eligibility criteria to the serving bureaucrats for appointment as vice chancellor in public-sector universities.

Under Section 3 of the Article 116 of the Constitution if the bill is passed again by the assembly, with or without amendments, the governor must then grant his assent, meaning thereby that if the Sindh Assembly pushes the bill through once again, Governor Tessori will be constitutionally bound to approve it.

#### Widely-criticised bill

Besides a strong criticism from opposition parties, including the Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P), Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf-backed Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC), and Jamaat-i-Islami (JI), the academic circles, education campaigners, professors' associations and education campaigners have also voiced their concerns, warning that the decision will severely affect the quality of education in Sindh's universities.

The senior minister said that the bill was initially proposed by the universities and boards department through the search committee and it underwent extensive deliberations before receiving the provincial cabinet's approval on Dec 4, 2024.

He said that after further review and modifications by the standing committee, the assembly passed the bill on Jan 31, 2025.

A statement issued from CM House said that it was pointed out in the cabinet meeting that as per original bill proposed by the U&B department, candidates must hold a master's degree, preferably a PhD, in the relevant field, along with 15 years of experience in academia, civil society, research, or leadership roles, as well as a distinguished record in research and publication.

It said that the standing committee proposed amendments to clarify these experience requirements while retaining same basic criteria which the assembly had passed. The cabinet was informed that in the original bill, it was stated that a cadre officer selected as vice chancellor must resign from civil service. The standing committee amended this to specify that the officer must either resign or seek retirement from service, depending on the individual case which the assembly also passed.

It was also pointed out in the meeting that the original bill did not specify an age limit. However, the standing committee amendment established that general candidates must be under 62 years of age, retired high court judges must be under 63, and retired Supreme Court judges must be under 67, which the assembly passed.

#### Sindh Civil Courts (Amendment) Bill

The cabinet was told that a recent amendment bill passed by the assembly had been returned by the governor with observation regarding the jurisdiction of the Sindh High Court.

The governor expressed reservations, citing Article 175(2) of the Constitution of Pakistan, which states that courts can only exercise jurisdiction conferred by law.

After thorough discussion, the cabinet asserted that the proposed Bill of 2025 did not violate Article 175 of the Constitution. "The bill aligns with the Sindh Civil Courts Ordinance, 1962, which has been amended multiple times without prior objections."

The cabinet further argued that the backlog of cases at the SHC is overwhelming, with only a few benches hearing civil suits. In contrast, district courts have a larger pool of judges, which could facilitate quicker resolutions. The judgment in C.P. No. 5913 of 2018 (Ghulam Asghar Pathan case) also highlighted the excessive burden on the SHC and recommended redistributing caseloads.

The cabinet approved the bill and referred it to the assembly for necessary action.

(By Tahir Siddiqui Dawn, 13, 16/02/2025)

### Controversial varsities bill gets Sindh Assembly nod again amid opposition boycott

Amid a highly tumultuous atmosphere, the provincial assembly once again passed the controversial Sindh Universities and Institutes Laws (Amendment) as the opposition parties jointly boycotted the proceedings against the new legislation that finally paved the way for current bureaucrats to be appointed vice chancellors of universities across the province.



While the protesting opposition members belonging to the Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P), Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI)-backed Sunni Ittehad Council and Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) gathered in front of the speaker's podium, Law and Parliamentary Affairs Zia Lanjar smoothly presented the bill in a thinly-attended house.

Holding placards, the opposition members, led by Opposition Leader Ali Khurshidi, chanted slogans against the provincial government's move to appoint bureaucrats as VCs and tore off the copies of the new law before walking out of the house.

Unperturbed by the strong protest and ballyhoo, the law minister smoothly got the bill passed into law with the votes of over 40 treasury members in the absence of opposition members in the house.

The house also re-passed the Sindh Civil Courts (Amendment) Bill.

Both the bills had been returned to the provincial assembly for reconsideration by the governor who had raised objections to the amendments to the laws.

Speaking on a point of order immediately after the passage of the bill, Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon criticised the opposition for the protest and boycott.

He said that the MQM-P and PTI had joined hands and the ruckus in the house was the result of their alliance. "Those who stole each other's mandate have now joined hands and they should be ashamed of it," he snarled.

Defending the new law, the senior minister said that none of the members who protested in the house had even bothered to read the bill.

He said that any capable and qualified bureaucrat could be appointed as the vice chancellor of the university as per the criteria set in the new law. "The opposition's uproar was a childish act," he added.

Later, talking to reporters at the Media Corner on the premises of the provincial assembly, Opposition Leader Khurshidi rejected the bill and said that the Pakistan Peoples Party wanted to take control of the universities across the province through the new law.

"This bill has not been passed by the Sindh Assembly, but by the PPP which wants to occupy higher educational institutions as well," he said.

He said that the MQM-P had in principle raised specific objections to appointment of non-PhD current bureaucrats in the meeting of the standing committee. "Now an SP [superintendent of police] can be appointed as VC in a university," he apprehended.

The opposition leader said that the MQM-P would move the court against the controversial bill as the discussion to opt the legal course were underway, adding that the occupation of universities by the PPP was not acceptable.

He said that corruption was rampant in the educational boards and parents were forced to bribe the officials for getting high percentage in the exams for their children. "The provincial government has already closed the doors of employment for the youth of urban Sindh" he said and added that PPP had now also taken over control of higher education institutions to run its "system" of corruption in universities.

Earlier, the house also unanimously passed a resolution to pay tributes to Lal Shahbaz Qalandar. The resolution was presented by PPP's Shazia Singhar.

### Question Hour

Furnishing statement and replies of the lawmakers' written and verbal queries during the Question Hour, Excise and Narcotics Minister Mukesh Kumar Chawla said that the provincial government was taking serious and effective measures to make the society drug-free.



The assembly members expressed concern over the increasing use and sale of drugs across the province.

MQM-P's Rashid Khan said that liquor was being sold to Muslims from registered wine shops. The deputy speaker interrupted him by saying that irrelevant questions should not be asked.

The provincial minister said that other government departments were also working very actively against drugs. He also emphasised the need to create awareness among masses about the drug menace.

Later, the assembly session was prorogued on the order of the governor.

(By Tahir Siddiqui Dawn, 13, 18/02/2025)

## SDGs in schools

AFTER the Millennium Development Goals failed to yield satisfactory results, the world needed a more holistic approach that could provide solutions sustainable in nature and that would have a global impact. Thereafter, the Sustainable Development Goals 2030, also called the 'Global Goals' and the '2030 Agenda', were introduced from the United Nations platform to address challenges like poverty, hunger, water scarcity, sustainable energy, and education. The SDGs set 169 targets and laid out guidelines to help UN member states address persistent challenges by fully mainstreaming and localising them in national priorities, plans, projects, programmes, and policies.



Pakistan was the first country to adopt the SDGs at the government level. It affirmed its commitment to their vision by passing a unanimous resolution in 2016. The government of Pakistan subsequently established SDG support units at the federal and provincial levels, which are mandated to provide guidance on SDG implementation and progress. UN Pakistan also provided important support for SDG implementation.

In reality, however, the SDGs no longer seem central to government policy. Given the spirit shown by Pakistan in 2016, it was expected that the SDGs would be fully embraced at all levels, at least by government institutions. Today, one wonders whether there is enough will to implement them in the true spirit.

The government's passivity regarding the implementation of SDGs gives rise to some important questions. For example, what is the actual budget allocated for SDG awareness and implementation? What have been the achievements of SDG support centres in the provinces? Are SDG budgets at the federal and provincial levels utilised for their intended purposes? How many PSDP projects have been approved for the localisation of SDGs, particularly school-related ones?

*The SDGs no longer seem central to government policy.*

If the government is serious about sustainable development, it needs to think about how it can align its projects, programmes, and policies with the maximum number of the SDGs' 169 targets. It appears that a large chunk of society still knows little about the SDGs and their potential benefits. The fruits of SDG-aligned actions cannot fully be enjoyed by the people if they do not understand them.

Sindh is the epicentre of various national developmental challenges pertaining to water, education, peace, and prosperity. The government is the only powerful actor. Moving forward, if Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari — the chairman of the ruling party in Sindh and the son of a national leader who strove for education even in her last public speeches — wants to give a long-term gift to the people of Sindh, he must start by localising SDGs at the school level.

The Annual School Census 2023-2024, conducted by the Reform Support Unit of the School Education & Literacy Department (SELD), states that there are 40,978 schools in Sindh. Of these, primary schools number 36,225; middle schools, 1,581; elementary schools, 1,027; secondary schools, 1,654; and higher secondary, 491. The total enrolment in these schools is 5,219,784 (of which 41 per cent are female and 51pc male). They are reportedly taught by a total of 168,628 working teachers. Why doesn't the government utilise its resources to target this huge number of enrolled children and teenagers and nurture them as future champions of sustainable development in Sindh? A holistic strategy can help realise this goal.

First, the government needs to form a dedicated team to conduct a needs assessment for villages where schools are being run. The identified needs can then be used to unfold criteria for implementing relevant SDGs through these schools. Various SDG-focused activities and actions that are relevant to the local context can also be executed, with an aim to spread awareness about sustainable development and how local citizens may contribute to make a global impact.

Second, a multi-language 'SDG book' must be provided to students. This book should contain enough educational material and visual understanding aids to guide citizens as to how various SDGs can be implemented in daily life. This 'SDG book' will play a pivotal role in nurturing champions for sustainable development.

Third, the SELD monitoring department should track the progress made against set school and village-wise targets. An SDG-focused training for the monitoring teams will be key to helping them understand implementation strengths, challenges, and opportunities.

Efforts for mainstreaming and localising SDGs can get a big boost if we start with schoolchildren. After all, it is they who will reap the fruits of peace, prosperity and sustainable development.  
(By Furqan Hyder Shaikh Dawn, 07, 21/02/2025)



## Education under attack

ON the sidelines of politics, it seems that political parties and their governments have much in common despite their constant snarling at one another. And I do not refer to their lack of power vis-à-vis the establishment or their eagerness to spend money they have done little to earn. Indeed, they are united in quite a lot, including their efforts to assert control over the higher education institutions in their domain.



Consider the recent news items from different provinces. In Sindh, the government has passed a law, which would allow bureaucrats — in addition to academics — to be appointed vice-chancellors (VCs) of universities. The law has also eased the criterion for appointments by removing the PhD condition. The bill was opposed by opposition parties such as the MQM and the Jamaat-i-Islami, but such is the numbers game in the assembly that legislation by the government faces no hurdle,

and opposition by the governor did little except delay the law for a short while. As the opposition leader, according to a story in Dawn, commented, "Now an SP [superintendent of police] can be appointed as VC in a university."

In KP, another comfortably placed government also took advantage of its numbers in the assembly and amended the law to give the chief minister the powers to appoint VCs. The amendments also give the government the powers to assess the performance of those appointed halfway through a four-year term. Once again, the governor's opposition to the law only caused a delay.

Since then, however, a petition filed in the relevant high court says that the change in law translated to "interference in the transactions and performance of universities and to interfere in their autonomy". The petitioners argue that under the earlier arrangement, these powers were with the governor who exercised them in consultation with the provincial government and chief minister, which allowed some checks and balances.

*Recent moves simply reveal the attitude of all governments towards education.*

Punjab seems to not have passed any law yet but there are reports that the government in Lahore is planning to flex its muscles similarly and centralise the sector. According to media reports, the changes being considered would make the chief minister and ministers the head of the syndicates governing higher education institutes and remove the VCs from chairmanship. That the institutes are fearing such moves is evident from the views expressed by educationists who spoke at a recent conference organised in Lahore by the Punjab Higher Education Commission and Higher Education Department.

Even for someone who does not follow the education sector closely, it is striking that three different governments run by three different political parties seem to be trying to make similar changes to a sector at more or less the same time. Just a coincidence?

The simplest explanation is the provincial governments face governors from other parties and changing the rules is the easiest way to stay in charge.

This is possible because there have been reports of tussles or friction between the governor and the chief minister in Punjab over the appointments to universities, which had also caused delays. Similarly, in KP, the PTI government had refused to appoint the VCs finalised under the caretaker government.

However, it might not be simply an effort to address administrative hurdles and crush the 'crushable' opposition; after all, most chief ministers these days really can't do much about the bureaucrats who are appointed in their provinces, but surely other political parties and their appointees, such as governors, should not think they can also assert themselves.

There may be more to it, however. It is also an effort to gain more direct control over the spoils system which governance has become for provincial governments, and the higher education sector (mostly still funded by the centre) is a frontier that can do with some conquering, especially in an environment where budgets are shrinking, as is fiscal space.

Indeed, in larger political environs where governments are helmed by political parties that win the elections through their domination of the state apparatus or the assistance of the said apparatus, rather than popular vote in fair elections, there is much clarity on what governance is aimed at. It is focused less on the electorate and more on keeping its benefactors and facilitators happy through doling out state patronage. The bureaucracy is, for example, key to their existence.

This can help explain the recent decisions for more direct control over universities, by allowing bureaucrats to be appointed to universities or by allowing them to run them. Or by appointing others as VCs as reward for this or that service. (It goes without saying that the bureaucracy itself might need to create more space for itself as mission creep may be denying it many of the positions it earlier assumed were the former's hunting ground.)

Indeed, these recent moves simply reveal the attitude of all governments towards education; it is seen to be no different from any other department to be used for providing 'naukris' and patronage, regardless of what is said in public about the importance of higher education. And in this, higher education is treated no differently from other government-run enterprises. In fact, it may as well be a stepchild where the financial crunch within the sector is concerned.

Indeed, even those who do not read newspapers regularly may have heard of the financial crunch at most higher education institutes.

One only has to run into students or teachers at public sector institutes to learn how departments are now even short of stationery at times. Students barely get funds for their activities while more and more admissions are given to those who can afford to pay rather than expect subsidised education. Indeed, successive governments have tried to reduce the higher education budget, citing the lack of fiscal space and the IMF conditionalities — despite the fact that these constraints never stop governments from

increasing expenses elsewhere such as the salaries of the judiciary, the bureaucrats, and even parliamentarians. Or build unnecessary roads in Islamabad.

But if the stepchildren can provide more opportunities for patronage, no government or political party will let go of it. In this quest, they are all united.

(By Arifa Noor Dawn, 06, 25/02/2025)

### **SHC issues notices on plea against selection of educational boards' heads**

The Sindh High Court (SHC) has issued notices to the chief secretary (CS), officials of the universities & boards department and other respondents in a petition impugning the selection process to appoint chairmen in various educational boards in the province.

Headed by Justice Muhammad Faisal Kamal Alam, a two-judge bench also put the advocate general Sindh on notice for March 7.

The petitioner, Altaf Ahmed Memon, also cited the search committee and eight candidates — retired bureaucrat Muhammad Misbah Tunio, Brigadier Syed Waseem Akhtar, Dr Asif Ali Memon, Ghulam Hussain Soho, Mansoor Rajput, Musharraf Ali Rajput, Dr Rafiq Ahmed Chandio and Dr Zahid Ali Channar, who were shortlisted by the committee and their names forwarded to the chief minister for approval — as respondents in the petition.

Later Brigadier Akhtar, the top-scoring candidate for the appointment of chairman to one of the eight educational boards of Sindh, had withdrawn his name and thus a new summary was sent to the chief minister.

#### *SPLA urges Bilawal to stop Sindh govt from appointing 'inexperienced' individuals*

The counsel for the petitioner argued that the search committee could not select the candidates as it was only for selection and appointment of the vice chancellors for the universities.

Referring to an earlier judgement of the SHC handed down in the case of Mushtaq Ahmed Sangrasi verses the province of Sindh and others, he also contended that the summary dated Feb 3 mentioning eight names for such appointments placed before the chief minister Sindh, was not within the parameters of law.

He submitted that the SHC in its judgment had held that the role of the search committee was confined to appointment of the vice chancellors and could not be extended beyond its legal mandate.

The petitioner sought directives for the respondents to immediately halt and withdraw the appointment process of the chairmen in the Sindh educational boards through the search committee and to ensure that all future appointments to be made strictly in compliance with the relevant law and statutory provisions.

Meanwhile, the Sindh Professors & Lecturers Association (SPLA) have urged PPP chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari to stop the chief minister from experimenting with the educational boards as inexperienced individuals were being appointed as chairmen instead of educational experts.

SPLA president Munawar Abbas and secretary general Ghulam Mustafa Kaka in a statement also warned that such move would be strongly resisted and asked the PPP chief to take notice of anti-education policies of the chief minister.

They expressed serious resentment over the reported appointment of retired bureaucrats and former military officials as the heads of educational boards in the province.

(By Ishaq Tanoli Dawn, 14, 04/03/2025)

### **Three Islamabad-based universities to open campuses in Karachi**

Three major institutes of higher learning — National University of Sciences and Technology (Nust), National University of Technology (NUTECH) and Comsats University — will establish their campuses in Karachi, it emerged on Monday.

In a landmark move, Federal Minister for Education, Science and Technology Dr Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui has given approval for setting up campuses of Nust, NUTECH, and Comsats University in Karachi. This initiative aligns with the prime minister's vision of expanding quality education, which is essential for the country's economic growth, said a press statement issued by the ministry of education.

It mentioned that a temporary campus of Comsats University will be set up on Hub Road. Additionally, a Rs4.6 billion PC-1 has been submitted for the development of a dedicated campus for Comsats University.

However, the education ministry did not share any further details regarding the establishment of Nust and NUTECH campuses in Karachi.

#### *Education ministry allows Nust, NUTECH and Comsats University to establish campuses in Sindh*

It is worth mentioning that Dr Siddiqui, the chairman of the Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan, hails from Karachi and the establishment of these campuses in the city would greatly benefit local students.

Sources in Comsats told *Dawn* that, in the past, several attempts were made to establish Comsats campuses in Sukkur, Gujar Khan and Dera Murad Jamali, but unfortunately, those projects could not be executed.

Currently, in addition to its main campus in Islamabad, Comsats University has six other campuses across the country, including in Wah, Abbottabad, Attock, Lahore, Sahiwal and Vehari. The establishment of a Comsats campus in Karachi is widely considered as a positive development.

Earlier in 2024, Dr Siddiqui had announced that the National College of Arts (NCA) and Pakistan Institute of Fashion and Design (PIFD) would open their campuses in Karachi. He had inaugurated the Karachi chapter of the PIFD in November last.

#### **Call for early appointment of CUI rector**

However, besides this initiative, Dr Siddiqui also asked to ensure the early appointment of a rector for Comsats University Islamabad (CUI) to facilitate the smooth functioning of one of the country's major public-sector universities, said a faculty member of Comsats.

The CUI has been facing administrative challenges, as it has been without a regular rector since July 2023. Several other key offices within the university are also being run through ad hoc arrangements. Recently, President Asif Ali Zardari, as the CUI chancellor, barred the acting rector from making any major policy decisions.

Last month, the Ministry of Science and Technology officially conveyed the president's directive and stated that it has come to the notice of the chancellor's office that the acting rector of CUI is making significant decisions, including appointments and promotions of teaching and non-teaching staff, especially for positions of BS-17 and above in CUI.

The letter further stated that the President of Pakistan/Chancellor, CUI, has directed that the acting rector shall not make any appointments or promotions of teaching and non-teaching staff to prevent further legal complications.

The appointment of a permanent rector for CUI has faced prolonged delays. The university has been functioning under an ad hoc arrangement since July 2023, when the then rector, Dr Mohammad Afzal, stepped down. Subsequently, then president Arif Alvi appointed Dean Dr Sajid Qamar as a temporary rector, a position he continues to hold.

Recently, the National Assembly Standing Committee on Science and Technology, chaired by MNA Khawaja Sheraz Mehmood, had urged the government to expedite the appointment of a permanent rector to ensure effective decision-making and long-term planning at the university.

Apart from the rector's position, several other key administrative posts, including those of registrar, treasurer and controller of examinations, are also being managed on a temporary basis. Additionally, many deans are serving in acting capacities.

In September last year, following a competitive process and interviews, a panel of three educationists was recommended to the president's office for the final selection of a rector. After an extensive review, President Zardari, as the chancellor of Comsats, approved Dr Shahid Munir's appointment and the Ministry of Science and Technology issued a notification confirming his selection on Sept 23, 2024.

However, Dr Munir did not assume the role, as he was appointed vice chancellor of the University of Engineering and Technology Lahore on the same day. Since then, the appointment process for a new rector remains incomplete, raising concerns about the university's administrative stability.

(By Kashif Abbasi Dawn, 13, 04/03/2025)

#### **SHC stays appointment of board chairmen**

The educational boards in Sindh, awaiting appointments of full-time chairmen for several years, are likely to continue functioning under the interim heads as the Sindh High Court has stayed the recent appointments of eight chairmen for the boards.

The Hyderabad circuit bench on Tuesday put the respondents, including the Sindh government through the chief secretary, Sindh Universities and Boards Department and the Search Committee besides the eight chairmen, on notice for March 26.

"Until the said date, the subject summary shall not proceed to the adversity of the petitioners," reads the order.

The petitioners Abdul Jabbar Abbassi and Sikandar Ali Mirjat were candidates in the recruitment process. The former is an associate professor teaching English language, based in Hyderabad, and the latter is the chairman of the Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education, Larkana.

A summary was moved with those eight names, besides one of Brig Syed Waseem Akhtar, to the Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah on February 3. But Akhtar's name in the shortlisted candidates stirred a reaction in the province because of his domicile of another province, prompting him to withdraw his candidature.

"This is another instance which demonstrates that the recruitment process is a sham and based on nepotism and reeks of mala fides," the petitioners contended.

The CM, on March 1, endorsed the eight names as recommended by the search committee for the appointment.

The two petitioners hinged their case upon the contention that the search committee, which conducted the recruitment, acted out of its purview because its domain is confined to the appointments of the public sector universities' vice chancellors.

Another argument, pleaded by BISE Larkana's chairman Mirjat, cited that none of the eight chairmen had prior experience of working in the educational boards of Sindh.

He alleged that all the board employees with relevant work experience were ignored in the appointment process in violation of the court order. He recalled that the secretary boards and universities had given a verbal assurance in the SHC on December

13, 2024, stating, "In the cases where candidates with equal qualifications are available, preference would be given to those with experience working within the department."

The petitioner pointed out that the same statement was made a part of the judge's order but the government respondents ended up allegedly flouting that order.

There are seven educational and one technical boards in the province. The eight names recommended for the posts of the chairmen include Dr Asif Ali Memon, Ghulam Hussain Soho, Mansoor Rajput, Muhammad Misbah Tunio, Musharraf Ali Rajput, Dr Rafiq Ahmed Chandio, Khalid Hussain Mahar and Dr Zahid Ali Channar. They secured 56 to 59.4 scores in the recruitment process.

The positions of chairman for the BISEs of Hyderabad, Sukkur, Larkana, Mirpurkhas and Nawabshah, as well as the secondary and higher secondary education boards of Karachi and the Sindh Board of Technical Education, were advertised in December, 2023. The petitioners prayed the court to declare the said appointments and the February 20 summary and its March 1 endorsement by the CM as unlawful.

They also pleaded the court to restrain the notification of the appointments and to bar the selected candidates from acting in pursuance of the summary.

(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter, The Express Tribune, 05, 06/03/2025)

### **Sindh unveils education plan for children of over 4,600 convicted prisoners**

The Sindh government has launched the "country's first-ever" program to support the education of children of convicted prisoners. The launch ceremony was held at the Karachi central prison and attended by Education Minister Sardar Ali Shah and Prisons Minister Hasan Ali Zardari.

This program is a joint initiative of the education and prisons departments and Paigham-e-Pakistan under which children of 4,684 convicted inmates across Sindh will receive educational support from primary to university level.

Speaking on the occasion, Minister Sardar Shah emphasised that the state must act like a mother, saying, "We are helping children who have committed no crime. Denying them education would be the greatest injustice because children should not be punished for the actions of their parents."

*Minister Sardar Shah says it is the duty of state to ensure education for children of inmates*

He further stated that just as it is the state's responsibility to punish criminals, it is also the state's duty to ensure education for their children. "We are setting a positive precedent," he added.

He claimed that Sindh is the first province to take such an initiative, and this is the world's first model to support inmates' children from school to higher education.

He stated that data on prisoners' children is being collected, and based on their families' preferences, more than 10,000 children will be helped to enrol in schools and universities.

He clarified that inmates' children can choose between government and private educational institutions, and the government will provide full support.

In the first phase, admission letters have been issued for 100 children, while data for 2,638 children has been collected, and they will soon receive admission letters in consultation with their families.

The provincial minister stressed the importance of filling schools with students and emptying prisons.

"It is our responsibility to ensure that these children are sent to educational institutions with complete protection."

Prisons Minister Zardari said that families of inmates often live a life similar to imprisonment due to the absence of a breadwinner. "We must change the perception of prisons in Sindh into reform centres. Helping inmates' children get education will integrate entire families into the rehabilitation process," he said.

He noted that the program will not only support the education of children of male and female inmates but also assist juvenile inmates in gaining education and vocational skills.

Currently, there are 14 convicted juvenile inmates in Sindh and 56 children living in jail with their mothers, for whom educational initiatives are also underway.

Paigham-e-Pakistan organiser Prof Muhammad Miraj Siddiqui announced that three types of programs have been proposed to support inmates' children — Education and vocational training from primary school to university, Microfinancing of up to Rs500,000 to help inmates' children start their own businesses and monthly financial assistance of up to Rs12,000 for families of convicted inmates to prevent criminal elements from exploiting their economic vulnerability.

Sindh's prisons currently house 24,000 inmates, including 4,102 convicted inmates and 582 on death row.

(By Dawn Reporter, 13, 13/03/2025)

## Murad announces major policy initiatives in education dept

Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah has emphasised the importance of foundational learning (FL) and early childhood care & education (ECCE).

He approved the decentralisation of financial and administrative powers to the school level for headmasters and supported the dissolution of additional or duplicate posts for town officers, district education officers (DEOs) and directors. He also stressed the importance of digitising the education department.

The directives were issued during a high-level meeting chaired by the CM.

While reviewing school education, the CM also highlighted the significance of public-private partnerships through the Sindh Education Fund (SEF) model and Education Management Organisations (EMOs). These initiatives aim to bridge the gap between primary and post-primary schools by enhancing existing schools and adding classrooms with essential facilities.

*CM sets target to enrol one million children in schools over the next year*

The meeting was attended by Education Minister Syed Sardar Shah, Chief Secretary Asif Hyder Shah, Ombudsman Sindh Sohail Rajput, PSCM Agha Wasif, Chairman of the Planning and Development (P&D) Najam Shah, Secretary of School Education Zahid Abbasi, Secretary of Finance Fayaz Jatui and other officials.

### Enrolment statistics

The chief minister was informed that there are 40,990 schools in the province, including 36,300 primary schools, 2,600 elementary schools, 1,600 secondary schools and 490 higher secondary schools. Current enrollment across all schools stands at 5.2 million, comprising approximately 3.09 million boys (59 per cent) and 2.12 million girls (41pc).

The education minister reported that 7.8 million children remain out of school.

The CM set a target of enrolling one million children in schools during the next financial year. He expressed satisfaction that the girls' enrolment ratio in schools was improving.

In response to a question, CM Murad was informed that the net enrolment rate for primary education is 67pc, while for secondary education, it is 22pc.

He emphasised the need to address the challenges of transitioning from primary to post-primary education by upgrading primary schools. To facilitate this transition, he approved the introduction of second shifts at elementary schools within existing primary schools, helping to bridge the gap between primary and post-primary education.

A report indicated that 19,808 schools were damaged in the 2022 floods, with 4,089 of those schools currently being reconstructed under the ADP/PSDP programmes.

Education Minister Sardar Shah told the chief minister that the damage to these schools has affected the enrollment of 2.3 million children. In response, the CM directed the education minister to expedite the reconstruction efforts for the damaged schools.

### Abolition of posts

In consultation with the education department, the CM decided to abolish several DEO positions at the district level, including DEO SEMIS, DEO Academics, DEO Sports and DEO Quality Assurance.

The number of taluka education officers (TEOs) will also be reduced. Instead of four TEOs per taluka, there will now be one TEO per taluka.

Additionally, instead of having two DEOs per district (one for secondary and one for primary), there will now be one DEO per district to ensure better unity of command and administrative efficiency.

Similarly, at the divisional level, there will be only one director of school education instead of two.

The CM has decided to transform existing high schools into model schools, with four model schools to be established in each taluka to improve education quality.

By the 2025-26 academic year, approximately 150 schools will be developed as model institutions, with a total of 600 schools expected to be transformed by the end of the 2028-29 academic year.

The meeting resolved to strengthen school management committees (SMCs) by enhancing training and community engagement and decentralising powers at the school level through a clustering policy.

To build institutional capacity, the government will improve teacher training institutes such as STEDA, PITE and DCAR. The school clustering policy will be implemented across the province, with 1,656 school clusters identified.  
(By Dawn Reporter, 14, 18/03/2025)

## Education department begins work on mobile app to digitise teachers' attendance

The Sindh government has initiated work on a mobile application aimed at digitally monitoring teachers' and staff attendance, linking attendance records directly with the accountant general's (AG) office, and digitising student enrolment records.

A meeting, chaired by Sindh Education Minister Syed Sardar Shah and attended by School Education Secretary Zahid Ali Abbasi and others, was held on Wednesday to discuss the digital attendance system for teachers.

During the meeting, the monitoring & evaluation wing demonstrated the mechanism for digitising attendance.

It was explained that teachers' attendance will be recorded through the Iris Recognition System, a biometric authentication technology that identifies individuals based on the unique patterns of their irises.

*In next phase, the app will be linked to AG Office to deduct absentees' salaries*

This system will be integrated into the mobile application to ensure the accuracy and security of attendance tracking.

"We are embarking on a digital journey of performance, transparency, and monitoring to ensure that resources are utilised based on facts," the education minister told the meeting.

Furthermore, the education minister was briefed that the mobile application will be integrated with geofencing technology to ensure that teachers and staff can only mark their attendance upon arriving on the school premises.

The app will function even without internet access, as offline attendance data will be automatically updated once the internet is restored.

The meeting also clarified that teachers and staff will be able to mark their attendance by opening the app on their mobile phones and scanning their faces. Attendance will be recorded both when arriving at and leaving school.

Additionally, an option for applying for leave will be included, along with daily, weekly, and monthly attendance reports. The application will also generate reports on late arrivals, early departures, and absences.

To improve efficiency, the education minister directed that a notification system should be incorporated into the app, sending warnings to mobile phones in case of unreported absences or consistent tardiness.

The student enrolment database will also be linked to the system, integrating student records with B-Form (national identity registration) for accurate future data tracking.

Minister Shah emphasised that the application should be user-friendly, fast, and secure, allowing all employees to use it without difficulties. He also stressed the importance of cloud-based data storage for enhanced security.

In the next phase, the application will be connected to the Sindh accountant general's office, ensuring that salaries for unapproved absences will be automatically deducted through the system.

(By Dawn Reporter, 14, 20/03/2025)

### **Future of Board of Intermediate Education Karachi students at stake as govt takes no action on exam fiasco report**

Although the fact-finding committee tasked with investigating the first year exam results of the Board of Intermediate Education Karachi (BIEK) completed its work and submitted its report around a month ago, no progress has been made so far in implementing its recommendations and updating the results, with the second-year exams fast approaching next month.

On Jan 13, the Sindh Assembly had formed a parliamentary committee to investigate the controversial results of the intermediate board in Karachi.

The committee, headed by its convener Dr Sarosh Lodi, had submitted a sealed report to the education authorities.

Official sources said that it recommended that grace marks ranging from 15 to 20 per cent be awarded to students who failed the exams.

*Government, opposition admit delay in taking up report submitted by fact-finding committee*

Additionally, it suggested revisiting the results of other educational boards in Sindh, particularly where pass rates exceeded certain thresholds.

When contacted, Dr Lodi told *Dawn* that the committee had completed its work and it was now up to the government to take further action. "It's the government work. The authorities will do it when they think it's important," he said.

Responding to questions, a spokesperson for Sindh Education Minister Sardar Ali Shah acknowledged that there had been delays due to certain issues that kept the minister occupied. He explained that the committee's report had not been opened due to that reason and because a session needed to be called for discussing the matter in presence of all committee members.

With the second-year exams scheduled next month, the uncertainty surrounding the results and the fate of updated/ grace marks has left many students in a state of confusion as to which exams they're going to retake this time.

It is pertinent to mention here that approximately 67 per cent of first year (science) students had failed in the 2024 exams, conducted by the BIEK, in one or more subjects, resulting in widespread public outcry and protests by students and opposition parties.



Following that, the BIEK had formed an inquiry committee to probe the matter. However, after objections from the opposition, the provincial government had issued a notification to form a House committee to investigate the poor results.

However, the non-seriousness of the officials concerned, including the education department, can be gauged from the fact that no session is being called in this regard and the issue has been put on the backburner.

When contacted in this regard, Leader of the Opposition in the Sindh Assembly Ali Khurshidi of MQM-P told *Dawn* that the government does not seem in a "mood" to do better for the students of Karachi.

"Again there comes that ethnic issue. I have raised this issue many times on the floor in Sindh Assembly and even with the education minister. I phoned him to say let's call a session and get done with this issue. But the government is not in a mood. They're putting the future of Karachi's students at risk," Mr Khurshidi said.

He said the officials concerned would address this matter when it's too late and when the purpose of such an inquiry is dead, adding that they [the authorities] are not willing to provide relief to students in the city.

(By Waqas Ali Ranjha Dawn, 13, 24/03/2025)

### **BIEK students to get up to 20pc extra marks in three first year subjects**

The parliamentary body formed to investigate controversial first year exam results of the Board of Intermediate Education Karachi (BIEK) has decided to give up to 20 per cent additional marks to all students in three subjects on the recommendations of a fact-finding committee that found glaring irregularities in the overall marking process.

The decision was taken in a meeting of the house committee, chaired by Education Minister Sardar Ali Shah and comprising Muhammad Yousuf Baloch, Adil Askari, Abdul Wasim, Taha Ahmed Khan, Muhammad Farooq and Muhammad Shabbir, on Tuesday. Leader of the Opposition Ali Khurshidi and Sikandar Ali Shoro were also present.

The house committee, which was formed by the provincial assembly on Jan 13, had assigned investigations into the controversial results to a fact-finding committee, headed by NED University's Vice Chancellor Dr Sarosh Lodi.

During the meeting, Dr Lodi presented the 250-page report that highlighted irregularities and mismanagement in various stages of the examination process, including assessment, record-keeping, and mark sheets.

On the recommendations of the fact-finding committee, the meeting granted 15 per cent additional marks to students in Physics and Maths each and 20pc additional marks in Chemistry.

#### **BIEK treated students unfairly, says minister**

The education minister said that students were treated unfairly by the board.

He added that the BIEK had been engaging in malpractice regarding results for the past eight years, which must now be stopped.

Speaking to reporters at the media corner of the Sindh Assembly after the meeting, he said that the fact-finding committee uncovered serious irregularities within the board.

"The inquiry committee has been given the authority to identify those responsible, and we will recommend action against such elements as per the rules," he said.

He also stressed the need for reforms in the board system. "We will continue this process. A centralised system is also needed to oversee board operations," he added.

Expressing concern over the state of affairs, he remarked that the BIEK was "operating like a mafia, manipulating the results of students who had previously scored well in their matriculation exams".

He pointed out that BIEK results were "significantly worse compared to other education boards in the province, creating a negative impression".

"We will present all recommendations from the committee to the Sindh chief minister," he concluded.

#### **Damning indictment of BIEK**

The report, a copy of which is available with *Dawn*, has highlighted severe irregularities and discrepancies in the BIEK examination process, its IT infrastructure and data security.

The committee found that, in many cases, examiners failed to accurately total students' marks. It also found what it called "un-assessed portions in copies".

For the scrutiny cases considered for relief, the report largely blamed "negligence on part of data entry staff for entry of marks".

The report stated that there was a high risk to data integrity and security with several gaps in digital maintenance of records.

It also pointed out the incompetence of the board staff in terms of the management of digital systems and stated that most work was still being done manually, which also led to miscounting and issues in data entry of multiple students' exams.

(By Waqas Ali Ranjha Dawn, 13, 26/03/2025)

### Inter students to get grace marks

The fact-finding inquiry committee, established by the Sindh Assembly to investigate objections regarding the Board of Intermediate Education Karachi (BIEK) XI exam results, has submitted its report.

The report highlights irregularities and mismanagement in various stages of the examination process, including assessment, record-keeping, and mark sheets. Following these findings, the committee has recommended awarding grace marks to all students.

Committee Chairman and Sindh Education Minister Sardar Ali Shah stated that students were treated unfairly by the board, adding that Karachi's education boards (matric and intermediate) have been engaged in malpractices regarding results for the past eight years, which must be stopped now.

Speaking to journalists at the media corner of the Sindh Assembly after the committee meeting on Tuesday, Minister Sardar Ali Shah revealed that the inquiry, led by Dr. Sarosh Lodhi, Vice-Chancellor of NED University, uncovered serious irregularities within the board. He stated, "The inquiry committee has been given the authority to identify those responsible, and we will recommend action against such elements as per the rules."

The minister emphasized that students will not be subjected to injustice. After agreement among committee members, it was recommended that grace marks be added to students' first-year results-15% in Physics, 20% in Chemistry, and 15% in Mathematics. He also stressed the need for reforms in the board system, stating that the committee's mandate will be used to implement reforms in Sindh's education boards.

"We will continue this process. A centralised system is also needed to oversee board operations," he added. Expressing concern over the state of affairs, he remarked that the Karachi Intermediate Board had begun operating like a mafia, manipulating the results of students who had previously scored well in their matriculation exams. He pointed out that compared to other boards, Karachi's results were significantly worse, creating a negative impression. "We will present all recommendations from the committee to CM.

(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter, The Express Tribune, 04, 26/03/2025)

### Unaffordable higher education

The rising cost of tuition at universities has become a pressing issue, prompting calls for government intervention to cap these fees. With university degrees becoming increasingly essential for people to climb the socioeconomic ladder, exorbitant tuition costs are not only a barrier to higher education, particularly for students from low- and middle-income families, but a brick wall that will keep most talented youngsters from ever realising their potential, while keeping wealth and power in the hands of the elite, no matter how questionable their competence.

While higher education costs at public universities are generally acceptable — still high for poor Pakistanis but mostly justifiable — fees at private universities have shot up in recent years, and only a handful of such varsities offer financial aid at levels substantial enough to make their costs competitive with public sector institutes. Meanwhile, self-financing is almost impossible due to the abysmally low starting salaries in most industries in Pakistan.

Student loans in many countries can be paid off using a portion of a recent graduate's salary over the course of several years. Salaries here are so low that for many people, even a low monthly payment would account for almost an entire salary.

The move to cap annual tuition fees at Rs1.8 million for MBBS and BDS programmes in private medical and dental colleges, though still high for many poor families, is certainly welcome, but the government should not stop at medical education.

Other essential fields, such as engineering, should also be capped to ensure that the most competent students, rather than the richest, get enrolled. And since the cash-strapped government is unlikely to be able to afford to increase capacity at government universities any time soon, it should seriously consider making private education more accessible by bringing in looser caps across the board, regardless of the degree programme.

(By Editorial, The Express Tribune, 14, 29/03/2025)

### PMA condemns hike in medical colleges' tuition fees

The Pakistan Medical Association (PMA)-Centre has strongly condemned recent government decisions concerning private medical college tuition fees and mandated free treatment beds.

In a statement, the association stated these decisions represent a grave injustice to aspiring medical professionals and the general public, effectively legalizing exorbitant fees and diminishing access to essential healthcare.

It pointed out that the Supreme Court's initial intervention, which increased tuition fees to Rs950,000 was already a cause for concern.

"However, the subsequent allowance of fees ranging up to Rs2.5m with a five percent annual increase, is nothing short of legalised exploitation," it said, adding that this decision effectively placed an unbearable financial burden on students and their families.

Demanding its immediate reversal, the association said: "We firmly believe that medical education should be accessible to all meritorious students, regardless of their financial background. The current fee structure will inevitably create a system where only the affluent can pursue a career in medicine, exacerbating the existing healthcare disparities."

The association demanded restoration of the original fee structure of Rs950,000 per annum, with a maximum annual increase of five per cent.

"We demand that all private medical colleges implement a mandatory 15pc merit-based scholarship programme to ensure that deserving students are not denied access to medical education due to financial constraints. We vehemently condemn the reduction of mandatory free treatment beds from 50pc to 30pc percent. This reduction severely compromises the provision of healthcare to the underprivileged. We demand the immediate restoration of the 50 percent quota.

"The government decision is a direct assault on the right to healthcare, particularly for the most vulnerable segments of our society. This decision prioritizes profit over the fundamental principles of medical ethics and social responsibility," it added.

The association called upon all relevant authorities, including the Supreme Court, the Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations & Coordination, and the Pakistan Medical and Dental Council (PMDC), to immediately rectify these unjust decisions.

"We urge them to prioritise the interests of students and the public over the profiteering motives of private institutions. We will not stand idly while the future of medical education and healthcare is being ruined. We are prepared to take necessary measures, including legal action and public mobilization, to achieve these demands," the association warned.-

(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter, Dawn, 14, 30/03/2025)

### **Sindh encourages establishment of bookbanks**

The Sindh Textbook Board has started the distribution of textbooks for the academic year 2025-26 on the directions of Sindh's Minister for Education Syed Sardar Ali Shah.

He said that the distribution of textbooks has been initiated alongside the beginning of the academic year. Over five million sets of textbooks will be prepared according to enrollment ratios, which will help ensure the timely delivery of books and contribute to an effective academic process.

To mark the beginning of the distribution phase, a ceremony was held on Saturday at the Sindh Textbook Board in Jamshoro. The event was attended by Chairman of the STBB Parvez Ahmed Baloch, Secretary Dr Nusrat Parvez Sehto, and other educational administrative officers.

At the launch of the first phase, the chairman handed over the textbooks to the taluka-level education officers in Jamshoro.

In this initial phase, textbooks have been provided to public schools in three talukas of Jamshoro District —Manjhand, Thano Bula Khan, and Sehwan. Initially, books will be delivered to primary public schools, while distribution to secondary schools will begin next week.

To make the process more effective, the Sindh Textbook Board has formed several monitoring committees. These committees will visit schools to ensure the books have been delivered and are available for students.

At the end of the last academic year, book banks were established in public schools on the instructions of Minister Sardar Ali Shah. He said that these newly established book banks will help ensure timely availability of textbooks in schools.

He further explained that textbooks will be distributed to schools based on student enrollment and the availability of books in the book banks.

(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter, The Express Tribune, 04, 06/04/2025)

### **BSEK to organise matric exams in Karachi from tomorrow**

The annual Secondary School Certificate (SSC) exams for Class IX and X will commence from Tuesday (tomorrow) in 499 examination centres across the city.

A total of 375,000 students will sit for the regular and private examinations of the Science and General Groups.

According to Board of Secondary Education Karachi (BSEK) chairman Ghulam Hussain Soho, this year, the board has issued computerised online admit cards to all the students of ninth and tenth classes.

The list of the 499 examination centres in government and private schools, of which 256 are for boys and 243 are for girls, has also been released on BSEK's official website.

The newly-appointed BSEK chairman said this during a meeting in his office, which was also attended by the Secretary Board Dr Naveed Ahmed and the Controller of Examinations Zaheeruddin Bhutto and others.

*Around 375,000 regular and private students are set to take IX and X exams across city*

It was also said that there are 19 hub centres established in the 18 different towns of Karachi, where the board officers will be responsible for distributing the examination papers.

Meanwhile, all the exam centres have been told to clearly display the examination rules. Any electronic device or mobile phones are strictly prohibited inside the exam halls and will be confiscated if found in possession of any candidate. They should also be careful not to be carrying any copied or cheating material.

"We have issued letters to the Commissioner Karachi, DG Rangers, Additional IG, Director Education Karachi, Director Private Schools Sindh and other departments regarding foolproof arrangements to impose Section 144 at the examination centres, under

which external interference will be prohibited in these centres and photostat machines operating nearby them will remain switched off during the exams," said the board chairman.

He also said that a reporting cell will be established in the Board Office to monitor the exams, where their special teams will remain vigilant.

He added that an effective system has been created for the delivery of examination papers, which will be delivered by the board officers to the hub centres from where the centre superintendents or their representatives will receive the sealed papers along with the authority letter to then deliver them to the examination centres.

Later, the school superintendents or their representatives will deliver the answer copies to the board as soon as possible.

The vigilance officers will reach the examination centres daily, half an hour before the examination begins, and will remain there for the entire duration of the examination.

They will monitor the students to prevent cheating and compile their reports daily, which will be submitted to the reporting cell established at the board.

The BSEK chairman further said that the vigilance officers will sign the sealed envelopes in his presence.

He added that the government is making a collective effort to prevent cheating through coordination between the district administration and the board.

He said that cooperation is being sought from all institutions for conducting transparent examinations on the instructions of the Sindh government.

It was also mentioned that the board has made a written request to the K-Electric to avoid load shedding during the exams so that the students can sit for their papers in a comfortable environment.  
(By Shazia Hasan Dawn, 14, 07/04/2025)

### **Matriculation exams kick off in Karachi**

The annual Secondary School Certificate (SSC) exams kicked off on Tuesday in Karachi, with 375,000 students sitting for the regular and private examinations of Science and General Groups.

Section 144 was imposed at the 499 examination centres set up in government and private schools, of which 256 were for boys and 243 for girls.

Like every year, the Board of Secondary Education Karachi (BSEK) took "extra measures" to prevent cheating.

The board also announced that this year instances of leaking exam papers on social media will be dealt with by the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA).

Ghulam Hussain Soho, chairman of the BSEK, said that the first paper commences at 9.30am and they ensure that the question papers reach the centres half an hour earlier, around 9am.

*If paper is leaked after 9am, then it is not our responsibility, says BSEK*

"Now if a paper is leaked after 9am, then it is not the responsibility of the Board," he pointed out.

BSEK's Controller of Examinations, Zaheeruddin Bhutto, said that the answer sheets have a QR code.

"We plan to replicate the same technology for the question papers also in the future, which will tell us which paper was leaked from where," he added.

Meanwhile, there was some confusion on the first day of exams regarding examination centres, as some were switched or changed without notifying the candidates in advance.

According to a BSEK spokesperson, the new list of examination centres has been uploaded on the Board's website.

The problem arose when some centres submitted a request to the controller of examinations to remove them from the list of centres due to unavoidable issues at their end.

These centres were instructed to at least print out the notice of the change of centres and paste it on their entrances.

The controller of examinations also directed the superintendents at all exam centres to facilitate students who are not able to reach their designated examination centres on time. "They must be allowed to sit for their exams," he said.

### **KE promises no loadshedding at centres**

A KE spokesperson stated that the power utility has officially received the detailed list of examination centers along with a formal request from the board on Tuesday evening.

"KE will extend full cooperation to the education department to ensure students face no disruptions during their exams. Loadshedding exemption for examination centres during exam hours has already been implemented, and no complaints regarding power supply have been received from the education department," the KE said.

(By Shazia Hasan Dawn, 14, 09/04/2025)

### **Board exams disrupted by power outages, inadequate facilities**

The annual exams for grades IX and X conducted by the Board of Secondary Education Karachi (BSEK) were marred by inadequate facilities and a lack of proper arrangements. Students had to sit on mats under the open sky due to a shortage of furniture. Many exam centres experienced faulty fans and power outages, adding to the students' discomfort. In the first shift, ninth-grade students appeared for the computer science exam, while in the second shift, exams for Urdu, Sindhi, and geography were held.

Power outages were particularly problematic, with several exam centres, including those on Jahangir Road, Jamshaid Road, Lyari, and Orangi, facing prolonged electricity shortages. This not only affected the overall exam environment but also created difficulties for both students and exam staff. In some centres, students were forced to use makeshift chairs arranged by decoration services or had to sit on the floor.

Government Boys Secondary School in Lyari also faced load shedding, which caused problems for students due to intense heat and lack of electricity. The exam centre's atmosphere was negatively affected, with students experiencing headaches, fatigue, and mental distress. Similarly, Government Boys and Girls Secondary School in Orangi experienced disruptions due to power outages, with students taking their exams in hot conditions without fans.

Government Boys Secondary School on Jahangir Road and Government Girls Secondary School on Jamshaid Road also reported power outages. Students stated that the electricity went out shortly after the exams began and did not return for two hours. This situation further heightened students' anxiety. The exam staff also faced challenges due to the power outage. However, all exams started and ended as scheduled in both shifts.

Load shedding continued for several hours in various areas of Karachi, including Lyari, Orangi, and Bin Qasim Town. Students and staff at the exam centres faced significant difficulties due to the lack of electricity. In addition, the exams were plagued by mismanagement this year. Last-minute changes to exam centres caused distress for students and parents.

Sources claim that certain elements within the board have taken control of the exam system, leading to irregularities in arrangements. Parents and teachers have demanded that the electricity supply be ensured during exam hours to provide a better environment for students. They also urged the BSEK administration to immediately address these irregularities and implement reforms to prevent such issues in future exams.

Meanwhile, the Chairman of the Board of Secondary Education Karachi has expressed concerns over load shedding at various examination centres during the ongoing annual exams. He said that students are facing difficulties due to extreme heat and the lack of electricity, which is affecting their ability to focus on their exams.

The Chairman appealed to K-Electric's senior officials to ensure an uninterrupted power supply during exam hours, specifically from 9:30am to 12:30pm and 2:30pm to 5:30pm, to help students complete their exams smoothly.

### **Bags stolen from exam centre**

Three students' bags were stolen from KMC School in the Liaquatabad B-1 area, which falls under the Liaquatabad police station, during the matric exams. The students arrived in the morning to take the exam, submitted their bags, and sat down to begin. After the exams concluded, they found their bags missing. The bags contained mobile phones, valuables, wallets, and cash. According to the affected students, the school administration refused to assist them, prompting the students and their parents to protest outside the school. They have demanded that higher authorities take notice of the incident and recover their stolen bags. When contacted, the concerned police station claimed to be unaware of the situation.

(By Ayesha Khan Ansari The Express Tribune, 04, 10/04/2025)

### **No more sugary drinks, junk food in Karachi's educational institutions**

The Sindh Food Authority (SFA) on Thursday asked the city administration to implement a ban on the sale of carbonated soft drinks, energy drinks, poppadoms, coloured and flavoured snacks such as potato crisps in the canteens of educational institutions.

The SFA reminded several government offices, including the offices of the commissioner of Karachi and deputy commissioners, district superintendents of the chief minister and chief secretary of Sindh, of an older notification issued seven years ago on Sept 5, 2018, to ban certain items from their canteens.

All the listed food items were banned from the canteens of educational institutions on the recommendation of the scientific panel of the authority keeping in view their high fat, sugar and salt content.

The reminder notification stated that it has been observed that the sale of these items has continued unabated within and outside the premises of educational institutions, posing serious health risks to students and other consumers.

"It is requested that directives may please be issued to both private and public schools and colleges to ensure strict compliance of restriction on the sale of the above-mentioned food items within the vicinity of educational institutions."

"Furthermore, awareness regarding this matter of public importance may also be actively promoted within educational institutions to reinforce its importance for public health," the notification added.

(By Shazia Hasan Dawn, 13, 11/04/2025)



### **Cabinet approves 20% grace marks for XI students**

The Sindh cabinet has approved granting grace marks to first-year intermediate students in Karachi, following recommendations from a sub-committee of the assembly.

According to the chief minister's spokesperson, 20% grace marks will be awarded to all students of High School Certificate part one (HSC-I) or grade XI in specific subjects, including 20 marks in Chemistry, Physics, and Mathematics held under the Board of Intermediate Education Karachi (BIEK) in 2024. Additionally, the chief minister has directed the Universities and Boards Department to implement reforms across education boards.

The chief minister has directed the chief secretary to establish a high-level committee to investigate irregularities in all education boards and submit a report. This decision comes just 12 days before the exams, potentially affecting the timely commencement of intermediate exams. The Department of Universities and Boards still needs to issue a notification regarding this decision, after which BIEK will initiate implementation.

However, the implementation process is expected to be time-consuming, requiring multiple stages to modify the results.

Notably, the Karachi Inter Board currently lacks a permanent head. Following the retirement of acting chairman Professor Sharaf Ali Shah, no permanent or acting chairman has been appointed, leaving the board without a decision-making authority.

According to sources within, the Department of Universities and Boards recently submitted a summary to the controlling authority, recommending that the charge of the Karachi Inter Board be assigned to the newly-appointed chairman of Karachi Matriculation Board, while the charge of the Hyderabad Board be assigned to an Additional Secretary of the Department of Universities and Boards.

However, the controlling authority sought details about the experience and expertise of the additional secretary in question, following which both summaries were sent back. As a result, both boards are currently functioning without chairmen.  
(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter, The Express Tribune, 04, 16/04/2025)

### **Cabinet orders probe into Sindh educational boards' irregularities**

The Sindh cabinet on Tuesday ordered a high-level inquiry into irregularities in all educational boards across the province and allowed extra marks to thousands of students who had appeared in first year exam conducted by the Board of Intermediate Education Karachi (BIEK) last year.

The cabinet meeting, chaired by Sindh CM, expressed displeasure over the performance of educational boards in the province and directed the chief secretary to constitute a committee comprising upright officers to conduct inquiry against irregularities in all the educational boards.

A large number of first year students in Karachi, many of whom had secured more than 80-85 per cent marks in matriculation exam, were given less than 50pc marks in the intermediate exams, while several others failed in many subjects.

The poor results in BIEK had triggered protests by the students, political parties and civil rights campaigners and led to the formation of a special committee of the Sindh Assembly to investigate the decline in passing percentage.

The cabinet was informed that a house panel formed a fact-finding committee, led by NED University's Vice Chancellor Dr Sarosh Lodi, conducted a detailed inquiry and recommended to grant 20pc grace marks in Chemistry and 15pc each in Physics and Mathematics to all students.

A press statement said that the chief minister also directed reforms to improve BIEK operations and prevent such issues in the future.

It said that while the Sindh Boards Ordinance of 1972 did not allow for grace marks, a similar measure was approved by the caretaker chief minister in 2023 based on a previous inquiry.

#### **Ban on plastic shopping bags**

The cabinet approved the amended Sindh Prohibition of Non-Degradable Plastic Products Rules, 2014, to potentially ban the manufacturing, sale, and use of all plastic shopping bags in the province, including non-degradable and oxo-degradable types.

The ban will take effect sixty days after the cabinet's approval.

The cabinet also approved new rules for the Sindh Habitual Offenders Monitoring Act.

The features of the new rules include creation of databases of e-tagged offenders at various police levels. It also says the monitoring devices must be waterproof, durable, non-removable, and capable of real-time tracking. Magistrates will order the attachment of these devices for at least six months, based on police requests or their own initiative.

The law aims to combat street crime and enhance safety in cities. The Act allows for the monitoring of habitual offenders using electronic devices (anklets/bracelets). A "habitual offender" is defined as someone arrested multiple times for specific crimes, including vehicle theft and drug offenses.

#### **Centre for Excellence on Countering Violent Extremism Act**

The Sindh Centre for Excellence on Countering Violent Extremism Act, 2025, was presented to the cabinet. It will be established within the home department, led by a board of governors chaired by the home minister.

The Centre's main functions include conducting research, developing policies to counter violent extremism, and providing support to FATF working groups on terror financing.

The cabinet, upon the request of the investment department, approved the allotment of 10.2 acres of land for the construction of Access Road-2, which would enhance the connectivity of the Dhabeji Special Economic Zone (SEZ) with the National Highway (N-5).

Additionally, the cabinet granted a 99-year lease for the allotment of 3.34 acres in district Malir and district West for the Marble City Access Road, as requested by the investment department.

The cabinet also approved the allotment of 10-12 acres of land to the National Transmission & Dispatch Company (NTDC), Hyderabad, in Taluka and District Matari for the construction of the Matari-Lahore Transmission Line Project.

The cabinet also approved the allotment of 5,816 square feet of government land for the construction of the Ram Ashram at Nangarparkar, district Tharparkar, as requested by the Pakistan Hindu Council.

Furthermore, the cabinet allotted 165,415 square feet of government land for the construction of the Ashram of Faqeer Parbrahm in Taluka Diplo, District Tharparkar.

Additionally, government land measuring 12-20 acres surrounding the Churrio Temple at Nagarparkar, district Tharparkar, has also been allotted.

(By Tahir Siddiqui Dawn, 13, 16/04/2025)

### **'Three students' hurt by falling plaster at FUUAST**

Three students of the Federal Urdu University of Arts, Science and Technology (FUUAST) were injured when a large piece of plaster chipped off from the roof of a corridor and fell on them on Wednesday.

The incident took place on the Gulshan-i-Iqbal campus. A video that went viral on social media shows a large piece of detached plaster lies on the ground on the campus as students pass through the corridor.

As the clip went viral, social media users were seen criticising the university administration for the "poor state of affairs" on the campus.

In the video, students could be seen taking the injured boy to hospital on their own claiming that the university management had refused to help them, saying "it is not our business".

They added that when they went to the clinic on the campus to get the injured students treated, there were no medicine.

The students said the clinic staff told them that they could only prescribe them some medicine and X-rays, which they could get from the outside.

The students claimed that they were then asked to meet the FUUAST registrar regarding the matter, who, instead of helping them, reportedly said, "it's not our business" and told them to leave.

The students said the BSc Block was in poor condition, and a similar plaster-falling incident had occurred in the recent past as well.

Responding to Dawn queries, A FUUAST spokesperson denied the impression of non-cooperation from the university administration.

The spokesperson added that Vice Chancellor Dr Zabta Khan Shinwari expressed regret over the injury of students in the incident.

The VC admitted that the university roof is in need of repair, and in this regard, he immediately instructed the registrar to ensure prompt repair of deteriorating roofs, the spokesperson added.

In a statement FUUAST Registrar Dr Sadia Khalil claimed that only one student had sustained minor injuries after which she immediately instructed the administration to send the injured student to a private hospital in a university vehicle for medical treatment.

(By Waqas Ali Ranjha Dawn, 13, 17/04/2025)

### **First-year exams fiasco report shatters BIEK, examiners' credibility**

With intermediate exams just around the corner next month, concerns over the credibility of the Board of Intermediate Education Karachi (BIEK) remain the same as the report of a fact-finding committee has revealed widespread irregularities in the checking and marking of answer copies of the exams held last year.

The house committee — which was formed by the Sindh Assembly on Jan 13 to investigate the controversial exams of last year — found issues such as unchecked answers, errors in the totalling of marks and inconsistent marking practices, etc.

The committee report, a copy of which is available with Dawn, states that a large number of answer scripts submitted for scrutiny showed "serious key-punching/data entry anomalies, a large number of totalling and counting mistakes, and significant portions unassessed or not graded".

These discrepancies, according to the committee's report, significantly undermined the credibility of the examination process.

One of the major findings was that 100 per cent of the answer scripts were checked at home by co-examiners, in violation of the board's standard operating procedures (SOPs), which require centralised checking at designated centres.

The committee observed that this lack of centralised oversight led to inconsistencies in marking, with some examiners awarding marks leniently and others making unjustified deductions.

The report said that the method of assigning head examiners to different distribution centres contributed to biased assessments. In multiple reviewed copies, the rationale behind the marks given was unclear, and discrepancies were found in the evaluation standards applied by different examiners.

"The BIEK has no mechanism for student learning outcome [SLO] attainment or sampling of questions from each subject after paper assessment. It [the board] has no idea how many questions were answered correctly by how many students. This leads to problems with the passing percentage, which, if handled properly, will resolve this issue permanently," the report says.

"Choosing head examiners for different answer scripts distribution centres is also causing biased assessments. Some copies are leniently assessed, and the rationale behind the marks assigned is unclear. In most of the reviewed copies, an unfair deduction of marks was observed," the report says.

Due to the shortage of co-examiners, many of whom refused to participate in the marking process citing low and delayed remuneration, the quality of assessment was further affected.

The shortfall resulted in an excessive workload for the available evaluators and raised concerns about the accuracy and fairness of the marking process.

The committee also pointed out the issues in the compilation of marks. The process which was carried out in multiple manual steps, was found to be prone to human error. In some cases, the marks recorded on the final result sheets did not match those awarded on the answer scripts. The report further highlights that in several instances, revised marks after scrutiny were either not updated or not reflected in the students' final results.

Additionally, the committee found discrepancies in the scrutiny review process itself. The roll numbers shared with the committee for reviewed cases were fewer than the actual number of applications submitted, raising concerns about record-keeping and transparency.

The report recommends comprehensive reforms in checking and tabulation procedures, including uniform assessment guidelines, expanded centralised marking facilities, and increased supervision during the evaluation phase.  
(By Waqas Ali Ranjha Dawn, 13, 28/04/2025)

### **BIEK exams for over 126,500 intermediate students begin today**

More than 126,500 students will appear in the Board of Intermediate Education Karachi's (BIEK) annual examinations for the 11th and 12th grades from Monday (today).

These examinations, in the morning and evening shifts, are to continue till May 29. The morning shift will be held from 9am to 12pm for the Science Pre-Medical, Pre-Engineering and Home Economics groups, in which more than 92,000 students will participate, while the evening shift will be held from 2pm to 5pm for the Science General examinations, in which more than 34,500 candidates will be participating.

A total of 182 examination centres have been set up in morning and evening shifts for the examinations, of which 122 are set up in the morning shift and 60 in the evening shift. A total of 36 examination centres in the morning and evening shifts have been declared highly sensitive.

According to BIEK Chairman Ghulam Hussain Soho, no one, including vigilance officers, centre control officers, centre superintendents, examination staff, teachers and students, will be allowed to carry mobile phones, tablets, laptops and electronic devices inside the examination centres. If a student is found with copied material or a mobile phone during the examination, he or she will be punished by cancellation of the paper or be disqualified from taking the examination for three years.

He said complaints of leaked papers being uploaded on WhatsApp groups after the start of the examination have been brought under control to a considerable extent. They have reached out to the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) so that the admins and members of such WhatsApp groups can be arrested and legal action can be taken against them.  
(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter, Dawn, 13, 05/05/2025)

### **Varsities told to get degrees of faculty, staff verified from HEC**

The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) of the Sindh Assembly on Monday directed all public universities in the province to have the educational degrees of all employees, including faculty members, verified by the Higher Education Commission (HEC) to prevent recruitment based on fake academic credentials.

The directive followed a PAC meeting, chaired by Nisar Ahmed Khuhro, during which it was revealed that an employee of the Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto Medical University (SMBBMU), Larkana, had been dismissed from service after his degree failed verification.

The director general of Audit Sindh said that recruitments had been made at the medical university without verifying degrees through the HEC.

SMBBMU Vice Chancellor Dr Nusrat Shah informed the PAC that MBBS, BDS and other medical degrees of applicants were verified by the Pakistan Medical and Dental Council, which issued verification certificates prior to recruitment.

However, he added that degrees of employees and job applicants were also verified through the HEC when necessary.

Mr Khuhro said all universities must complete the degree verification process within a month and submit a report to the PAC.

He added that faculty and staff members whose degrees could not be verified should be dismissed from service. Mr Khuhro warned that recruitment based on fake degrees would not be tolerated in universities or any other institution in the province.

(By Tahir Siddiqui Dawn, 13, 06/05/2025)

### **Govt to launch 5-year plan for adolescent education**

The Sindh government, in partnership with UNICEF, has announced the development of a five-year multi-sectoral roadmap which aims to identify and eliminate barriers to education while creating an inclusive and supportive environment for learning across the province.

The announcement was made during a high-level meeting in Karachi, chaired by Sindh Education Minister Syed Sardar Ali Shah. Participants included Sindh School Education Secretary Zahid Ali Abbasi, Chief Program Manager Dr Junaid Samo, and UNICEF officials, including Chief Field Officer Prem Bahadur Chand, Education Manager Abeer Maqbool, and Education Specialist Asif Abrar.

The roadmap is expected to integrate various sectors - such as health, birth registration, social protection, public health, climate change, and more - to address the complex challenges hindering access to education.

Speaking at the meeting, Minister Shah underscored the need to remove all obstacles preventing children from enrolling in and continuing school, stating that education should be made accessible and convenient for every child in Sindh.

He stressed the importance of early childhood development, highlighting birth registration as a critical first step in ensuring a child's right to education and access to essential services.

The meeting also spoke about a range of socio-economic and environmental factors affecting children's educational outcomes.

These include economic hardship, child labor, early marriage, malnutrition, conflict, environmental degradation, political instability, and generational divides. These challenges, officials warned, are expected to intensify in the coming years and require a holistic, cross-sectoral strategy.

(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter, The Express Tribune, 04, 09/05/2025)

### **Sindh, Unicef to develop five-year plan for out-of-school children**

The Sindh government, in collaboration with Unicef, has decided to develop a five-year multi-sectoral roadmap aimed at addressing the education needs of out-of-school children and adolescents.

Under this initiative, a strategy will be formulated to identify and eliminate barriers hindering access to education.

A key meeting regarding the development of this roadmap was held in Karachi which was chaired by Sindh Education Minister Syed Sardar Ali Shah, and attended by Unicef representatives.

"The roadmap is expected to help bring a greater number of children into the school system in the coming years," an official statement said.

On this occasion, the provincial education minister acknowledged that children faced several challenges in accessing and continuing education. He stated that all such barriers would be removed to pave way for children to attend school, based on their convenience.

Highlighting a crucial point, Sardar Shah emphasised the importance of birth registration along with awareness of a child's other essential needs.

The meeting participants were informed that the roadmap would cover sectors such as birth registration, health, public health, social protection, climate change, and more.

It was stated that children currently facing various social and behavioural challenges in relation to education — including economic hardship, conflict-related issues, environmental changes affecting school conditions, administrative and political problems, generation gaps between children and elders, and related interpersonal dynamics.

These challenges are expected to worsen in the coming years, necessitating a comprehensive multi-sectoral response.

The meeting participants were informed about alarming statistics: 46 per cent of children in Sindh face obstacles in continuing their education; some 25pc of girls are married before the age of 18; some 38pc of children aged 10-19 are engaged in labour due to financial pressure; 50pc of children suffer from malnutrition; 66pc of newborn babies are not registered at birth; 47.5pc of children live in poverty, with 71pc of them residing in rural areas; 45pc of children lack access to basic infrastructure like toilets, clean drinking water, and safety; and 79pc of children do not have access to vocational training.

The minister stressed the need to developing a strategy that takes all these factors into account in order to create a conducive environment for future generations to pursue education.

The meeting participants also reached an agreement on creating a comprehensive database to support early childhood, primary, and elementary education.  
(By Dawn Reporter, 14, 10/05/2025)

### Three short-listed for Dow University vice chancellor

The Search Committee formed to appoint vice chancellors for public sector universities in Sindh has finalised a shortlist of three candidates for the position of VC for Dow University of Health Sciences.

After conducting interviews with 17 shortlisted applicants — selected following a detailed scrutiny of credentials — for two days, the committee has recommended three names: Pro Vice Chancellor of Dow University, Professor Dr Nazli Hossain; former pro VC Professor Dr Jahan Ara; and Professor Dr Khalid Ashrafi. Dr Shahid Rasool, Medical Superintendent of JPMC, did not make it to the final list.

According to sources within the Sindh Universities and Boards Department, the shortlisted names have been forwarded to security agencies for clearance. After receiving security clearance, the department will send the final summary to the Controlling Authority of Universities. The chief minister will then make the final appointment from among the three recommended candidates.

A total of 23 candidates had applied for the prestigious post. The Search Committee comprised key stakeholders, including the outgoing Chairman of the Sindh Higher Education Commission, Secretaries of College Education and Universities & Boards Departments, and former VCs Dr Saeed Qureshi and Dr Kartar Dewani, who served as permanent members of the panel.

The final decision is expected following the completion of the security vetting process.  
(By Safdar Rizvi The Express Tribune, 05, 16/05/2025)

### Students, parents in Karachi face hardship over tough O/A-level exam schedule

With several examples of clash of paper schedules in the current Cambridge exams, students and parents have been demanding a revision in their date sheets as it is putting extra pressure on the candidates who then have to sit for two exams, sometimes even three, in one day.

Besides the mental stress, students have also been complaining of their hands getting tired while sitting for back-to-back exams. Their parents, too, are saying that they drop everything to be available for their children during exam time. They wait in the sitting areas outside exam centres during every paper and when there are two papers, they have to be there for the entire day.

"We are paying lacs of rupees for the exams. The least that Cambridge can do for us is listen to us and see our plight and reschedule the exams where there are any such clashes of papers taking place on the same day," said one parent.

Some private school associations have also raised their voices over this matter in the hope that the Cambridge management in Pakistan would pay some heed.

Academic and activist Kashif Mirza, who is the president of All Pakistan Private Schools Federation (APPSF) was of the opinion that Pakistanis are paying billions to Cambridge as these are expensive exams. Cambridge should at least be considerate enough to not put so much stress on the candidates despite taking so much money from them.

"You also have the poor parents sitting outside exam centres. And when the children are appearing in two or more papers in a day, it means double duty for the parents," he pointed out.

"Besides, two exams in one day means that a candidate cannot do justice to both the subjects he or she is appearing in," he added.

"My request to Cambridge under these circumstances is that since they are making so much money here at our expense, they should at least upgrade their infrastructure instead of stressing out the candidates just because they couldn't come up with a better schedule.

"They should keep a cushion of days in their exam schedules to address the clash of subjects," he suggested, adding that such issues of paper clashes in exam schedules are usually seen happening in South Asian countries, not in Europe where Cambridge follows a different strategy.

"Cambridge needs an overhaul here. They should design a software, maybe using AI, if they can't do it themselves, to come up with better exam schedules. In this day and age, students are also sitting for their exams online. Such mechanisms should also be developed and introduced by Cambridge," said the APPSF president.

Cambridge International's Country Director Uzma Yusuf, meanwhile, said that they are the biggest exam board in the world, which comes with plenty of responsibility. "We are not deliberately putting undue pressure on students," she said.

"We are there in some 160 countries of the world. It is a huge responsibility. We are the Cambridge University's exam board. The clashes in exam schedules happen due to there being so many subjects on offer by Cambridge," she said.

"Besides," she said, "there is a general perception here in Pakistan that every paper is of a duration of three hours only but there are also Cambridge exams which may be of durations of 40 minutes or maybe one hour and 10 minutes."

"So a student is not sitting in the examination hall for three hours in the morning and coming back for another three hours in the afternoon," she said.



"Where there may be a clash between papers, a student may sit for his or her morning paper, take a break, rest, have something to eat or drink under centre supervision and then sit for the other paper," she said.  
(By Shazia Hasan Dawn, 13, 18/05/2025)

### **MBBS fee spike irks families**

In Pakistan, nearly all parents hope that at least one of their children gets to flaunt the highly revered, "Dr." title of a doctor. However, as the medical education sector becomes increasingly reliant on costly private institutions, it appears that the white coat will now be reserved for those born with a golden spoon in their mouth.

In 2019, the total tuition fees for the five-year Bachelor of Medicine, Bachelor of Surgery (MBBS) degree was fixed at Rs5 million. Although private medical colleges implemented this policy for two years, now they are charging Rs10 million to Rs15 million as fees for the same degree. As a result of the increase in fees, students and their parents are facing severe financial difficulties since they also have to bear the additional cost of Rs2 million on books, clothing, transportation and daily expenses during the five-year academic period.

Beenish, a pre-medical student, shared her experience of taking admission at a private medical school after she could not qualify for a government college. "In addition to the first-year fee of Rs2.2 million, I was asked to deposit additional money in the name of donation, for which no receipt was given. If we use the college's transportation, then Rs100,000 is collected annually as travel charges. Similarly, a monthly fee of Rs50,000 is sought for living in the girls' hostel. Our parents are suffering from severe mental stress because of the huge sum of money required for our education," said Beenish.

Ali Murtaza, a second-year medical student at a private medical college confirmed that exorbitant fees were being collected from students at private institutions even though their faculty was incomplete. "Private medical colleges have a monopoly in the city and are charging arbitrary fees. As a result, medical education has become so expensive that the children of low to middle-income parents cannot afford to become doctors," exclaimed Murtaza.

Muhammad Zia Iqbal, former Dean of Basic Sciences at Dow University and former Professor at the Sindh Medical College, confirmed that private medical education had become a commercial industry in the country since the Pakistan Medical and Dental Council (PMDC) had failed to formulate any uniform policy regarding their fees. "Hence, the annual fee of private colleges has increased by 200 per cent," claimed Iqbal.

On the other hand, the PMDC has maintained complete silence on the extraordinary, unannounced and arbitrary increase in tuition fees by private medical and dental colleges. From 2019 to 2021, the annual tuition fee for MBBS was fixed at Rs1 million. However, after the dissolution of the Pakistan Medical and Dental Council (PMDC), the Pakistan Medical Council (PMC) divided medical colleges across the country into A, B and C categories, after which these colleges started deciding their own fee.

Some medical colleges are charging an additional fee of 10 to 20 per cent every year. An international medical college in Karachi is charging a five-year fee of 90,000 US dollars, hence proving that the PMDC has become practically inactive. This is aggravated by the fact that limited seats are allocated for medical education in government medical and dental colleges.

A total of 2,450 seats are allocated for MBBS in government medical colleges in Sindh. The number of government medical colleges across Sindh including Karachi is 12 while the number of government dental colleges is seven and the number of government medical universities is six.

The Pakistan Medical and Dental Council has issued a public notice on January 8, 2025, directing private medical and dental colleges to not collect fees for the academic session of 2024-25 until the Medical Education Committee established by the Prime Minister under the chairmanship of the Deputy Prime Minister takes a decision regarding the review of tuition fees.  
(By Tufail Ahmed The Express Tribune, 04, 26/05/2025)

### **Student's family attacks school teacher**

Many mothers get angry when teachers punish their children but a mother went a bit too far when she sent her cop brother and husband to beat up female teachers for trying to discipline her daughter for habitually coming late to school.

The Jamshed Quarters police registered a case involving an incident in which the parents of a student, accompanied by a police officer, allegedly assaulted female teachers at a private school on Jamshed Road. The confrontation reportedly stemmed from a disciplinary action taken by a teacher against the student for habitual tardiness.

The FIR was lodged on the complaint of the affected teacher, Saira Iqbal. According to her statement, on May 16, she reprimanded a student, Eshal Shahid, for repeatedly arriving late to school and briefly made her stand as a disciplinary measure. The following day, the student's mother visited the school and, after confronting the principal, verbally abused Saira. Both the teacher and the principal offered an apology, after which the situation appeared to have been resolved.

However, on May 26, the situation escalated. According to the FIR, Eshal Shahid's father, Shahid, and her uncle, Abdul Hafeez - who identified himself as the SHO at Kalakot police station - arrived at the school accompanied by the student's mother. They physically assaulted teacher Maria Shahid and Saira. SSP East Dr Farrukh Raza confirmed that legal proceedings are underway based on the school administration's complaint.  
(By Sajid Raud The Express Tribune, 04, 29/05/2025)

## Experts concerned over shrinking academic freedom in Pakistani universities

Academics and civil society members have raised concerns that academic freedom in Pakistan is shrinking due to government control and financial problems in universities and warned that decisions to allow bureaucrats to lead higher education institutions and contractual appointments would further limit free thinking and threaten the future of a vibrant academia.

Speaking at a session, "Protecting Academic Freedom", organised by the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) at the Pakistan Medical Association (PMA) House on Wednesday, the experts also pointed out that if the situation persists, it would ultimately hinder the overall progress of the country. The event was moderated by HRCP's Qazi Khizar.

At the outset, economics expert and academic Dr Asim Bashir gave a detailed presentation on Sindh's education budget and issues related to primary and higher education.

He said that the decision to appoint bureaucrats as vice chancellors of universities in Sindh could affect academic freedom in several ways and undermine the quality of education.

He noted that there are significant differences between the academic backgrounds, training and work methods of bureaucrats and academics. Therefore, appointing bureaucrats to lead academic institutions is inappropriate, he argued.

He added that in developed countries, there are no instances of bureaucrats heading higher education institutions. On the contrary, it is often academics and subject experts who are appointed to lead state institutions and even take on bureaucratic roles.

Dr Akhtiar Ghumro, vice president of the Federation of All Pakistan Universities Academic Staff Association, criticised the procedures, tests and interviews involved in the selection of vice chancellors. He claimed that these appointments are largely driven by "political influence and favouritism rather than merit." He also claimed that no vice chancellor is appointed without clearance from security agencies.

Dr Ghumro also criticised the Sindh government's decision to make contractual appointments in higher education institutions. He said such a system would foster obedience and compliance rather than critical thinking and dissent — and without dissent, there can be no freedom of speech or formation of independent organisations.

Prof Dr Arfana Mallah from Sindh University said that policy debates related to education and intellectual growth have become rare and faculty members are increasingly preoccupied with concerns over salaries, pensions and financial survival due to the worsening situation.

She criticised the Higher Education Commission (HEC), saying it withholds funding and grants for universities that do not seek prior approval for organising conferences on specific topics or inviting specific speakers. She added that critical and intellectual conferences are not encouraged, but rather denied funding.

She also said that the Pakistan Peoples Party, despite claiming to uphold democratic values, has not lifted the ban on student organisations. Given the current situation, she warned, even teachers' associations might face restrictions in the future.

Senator Masroor Ahsan, a member of the Senate Standing Committee on Education, said that there has been a long-standing struggle to lift the ban on student unions. Despite persistent efforts, no progress has been made so far. However, he said that the struggle would continue. He emphasised that student unions have historically produced strong political leadership, and therefore, the ban should be lifted.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr Riaz Sheikh, dean of the faculty of social sciences at SZABIST, warned that if the current situation persists, universities will no longer be spaces where critical thinking and reason can flourish.

He emphasised that economic and financial autonomy is essential for academic freedom, yet universities across the country are facing severe financial crises.

He said that some selected universities in certain cities receive disproportionate funding from the HEC, while others are neglected. This disparity, he said, must be investigated.

He also raised concerns about HEC policies and curriculum, particularly in religious studies, which he said are fostering discrimination among religious groups within the country. Therefore, he called for nationwide unity to stand against the worsening situation in academia.

Dr Tauseef Ahmed Khan, convener of the retired teachers' committee at the Federal Urdu University of Arts, Science and Technology (FUUAST), said that at his own institution, the university administration — particularly the vice chancellor — is withholding pensions and other dues of retired employees, despite sufficient funds being available in the university's accounts.

He said financially distressed universities are likely to struggle with academic freedom, as the lack of financial autonomy hampers both intellectual and academic activities.

Prof Roshan Ali Soomro of the FUUAST lamented that pensions and other dues remain unpaid and despite letters sent to the President of Pakistan, there has been no response. He said that when teachers question Vice Chancellor Dr Zabta Khan Shinwari about the pending payments, he responds dismissively and asks how any teacher can question him.

HRCP Chairperson Asad Iqbal Butt said that public participation and opinion have never been considered in state policymaking and national debates. As a result, he said, the country faces anarchy and chaos.

He said the education budget in Pakistan is already inadequate but the allocation for research is even lower. He questioned how the state and its institutions could be expected to function effectively or evolve without investment in research.

He added that spending only 2 per cent of the budget on education is like continuing to produce clerks, as was the focus under British colonial rule but unfortunately, that same outdated education system persists today. "Nations do not progress like this," he said.

(By Waqas Ali Ranjha Dawn, 13, 29/05/2025)

### **Will CIE lose its edge?**

Once regarded as a gold standard in academic assessment, Cambridge International Education (CIE) is now facing increasing scrutiny in Pakistan. Following a recent shift that allowed private schools to independently conduct O and A Level examinations - previously handled solely by the British Council - reports of paper leaks, and lack of accountability have cast a shadow over the system. Stakeholders are questioning whether the integrity and global standing of Cambridge qualifications in Pakistan are being compromised.

Until just two years ago, the British Council was the sole authority overseeing these exams in Pakistan. Now, over 20 private schools in Karachi and Islamabad are conducting the exams themselves. This decentralisation has raised serious concerns about transparency and security. Reports of exam paper leaks are on the rise, causing distress among thousands of students and their parents.

Recently, an AS-level Physics paper was reportedly leaked and widely circulated on social media before the scheduled exam. Similar claims have emerged regarding other subjects. As more schools gain the authority to conduct exams independently, the risk of compromised exam integrity appears to grow proportionally.

Cambridge International has acknowledged some of the leaks in a public Facebook statement, urging students to stay focused and promising investigations. However, the lack of transparency around these investigations - particularly the absence of shared findings or any disclosed disciplinary actions - has left stakeholders dissatisfied and concerned. Parents and students fear that ineffective preventive measures could lead to more leaks in the future.

The decision to let private schools conduct exams reportedly stemmed from a former official at the Federal Ministry of Education. However, the ministry now appears to be powerless in addressing the fallout, including the ongoing paper leak scandal.

While CIE administers the General Certificate of Education (GCE) O and A Levels in Pakistan, it's worth noting that these programmes were phased out in the UK in 1986 and have not been part of the official education system there for nearly four decades.

Another point of contention is the continued use of the outdated alphabetical grading system (A\* to E), as opposed to the numerical system (1 to 9) now standard in the UK. Some education experts argue that this inconsistency places Pakistani students at a disadvantage when competing globally for academic and professional opportunities.

Pakistani parents spend an estimated Rs 30 billion annually on Cambridge exams. When papers are leaked and exams are not rescheduled, students are often graded based on predicted scores instead of their actual performance - undermining the entire purpose of standardised assessment.

As a result, Cambridge is not only losing its academic superiority in Pakistan but also facing growing criticism from students who feel that the organisation's standards are now limited to curriculum design. With exam execution resembling local board practices, the credibility and perceived value of Cambridge qualifications in Pakistan is diminishing.

When contacted by The Express Tribune, a Cambridge spokesperson said, "Cambridge has strict security protocols in place to safeguard exam materials, and these protocols apply equally to our partner institutions and schools." In response to questions about the outdated O-level system, the spokesperson added, "The qualification is internationally recognised and accepted by leading universities worldwide. The exams offer students an opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and skills through written, oral, and practical assessments."

Regarding the paper leaks, the spokesperson said: "We conduct prompt and thorough investigations into all evidence to ensure fairness in results. However, we can not comment on specific allegations during the exam period in order to keep students focused on their exams."

(By Safdar Rizvi The Express Tribune, 04, 29/05/2025)

### **Protest staged outside school over assault on female teachers**

A large demonstration was staged outside a private girls' school on Thursday as students, teachers, parents, and civil society members demanded justice following an alleged violent assault on female teachers. A heavy police contingent was deployed to maintain order as the protest disrupted vehicular traffic in the area.

Protesters carried placards with slogans such as "We want justice," "Ensure protection of teachers," and "Arrest the accused." The demonstration was triggered by a May 26 incident at Al-Badar School, where a student, Eshal Shahid, arrived accompanied by her parents and her maternal uncle, Abdul Hafeez - a police official posted at Kalakot police station in Lyari.

According to protesters, Hafeez entered the school premises brandishing a handgun, physically assaulted female teachers, used abusive language, and harassed staff. The incident reportedly caused distress among teachers and students.

Protesters criticised the school administration for its alleged inaction during the altercation, questioning how a school that promotes Islamic values failed to protect its staff. They also expressed concerns over the safety of students in an environment where such incidents occur unchecked.

The SHO of Jamshed Quarters police station arrived at the scene to negotiate with demonstrators, while additional police personnel were deployed to prevent escalation. Protesters demanded a.) the immediate arrest of Abdul Hafeez; b.) legal action against those involved; and c.) accountability for the school administration's failure to intervene.  
(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter, The Express Tribune, 04, 30/05/2025)

### **Shortage of schoolbooks distresses students, parents**

The academic year in schools across Sindh started in April but despite the passage of around two months, there is a persistent shortage of textbooks for classes one to matric as hardly any class's complete course pack is available in the market.

A visit to the Urdu Bazaar has shown that there is a particular shortage of mathematics, English, biology, Urdu and Islamic studies books at most stores while even other books are in short supply.

Parents along with their children could be seen waiting in lines at major bookshops with the hope to get the course books but the salesmen told them that either one or another book was not in the stock. Therefore, they were asked to come again after a few days.

A sole distributor there told Dawn that right now, there was no complete course pack available for class one to matric as textbooks were not being printed in sufficient numbers.

*STBB has issued 2.1m books thus far against the demand of 4.5m; education dept spokesperson says power loadshedding affects printing*

A parent, whose son is a class two student, said the school where his son studied used both the Sindh Textbook Board (STBB) and Oxford University Press books. "But every year I face this issue that the complete course pack is not available. And it's causing a lot of trouble. There are long queues of people at Urdu Bazar and I have to wait there in heat only to find out that one or the other book is still not available."

He also explained that the private book publishers with the aim of "generating sales volume" either change books or some chapters in them in order to ensure that used books could not become useful again for other students next year.

He believed that this tactic of publishers also contributing to the shortage to new books in the market.

Madiha Ali, mother of Mohammad Rohaan, who studies in class eight, explained how long they had to wait to get the course books and that despite the wait they had to arrange used books as new ones were not available.

"We had been trying for the last week of April but couldn't get the course pack. Many books were not available. Somehow we found second-hand books at a store and purchased those," she said.

Another parent asked that if the provincial government was not able deliver books on time, which happens almost every year, then why it started academic year in this time of the year and announced distribution of books.

When contacted, Atif Vighio, a spokesperson for the Sindh education department, said that the STBB had issued total 2.1 million books thus far. However, the total market demand of books is 4.5m, he added.

About why there is the shortage of books, he said that the primary reason behind it was power loadshedding which affected printing.

(By Waqas Ali Ranjha Dawn, 13, 01/06/2025)

### **Rs523.7bn earmarked for education**

The budgetary provision for the education sector in Sindh for 2025-26 has been proposed to be Rs523.73 billion against last year's budget of Rs458.2bn.

While presenting the Sindh budget for the new financial year on Friday, Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah said that education plays a pivotal role in human capital development. "With nearly 67 per cent of its population below the age of 30, Pakistan stands as one of the youngest nations in the world," he reminded, adding that the government of Sindh strives to grab this golden opportunity to capitalise on a potential demographic dividend.

Therefore, this year the provincial government has provided funds to educational institutions at all levels from primary to universities and medical education, thus aiming to align with SDG-4, which is inclusive, equitable quality education for all by 2030, he said.

The budgetary provision for this year, recording a significant increase of 12.4pc, includes primary, secondary, middle, higher secondary, college and university levels. It also represents 25.3pc of the total current revenue expenditure.

*Rs500m allocated for awarding scholarships to deserving students in foreign universities*

While presenting some of the education budget's striking features, the CM said that for primary education, the existing budgetary allocation is being enhanced from Rs136.2bn to Rs156.2bn while the provision of funds for middle / elementary education is also being increased from Rs36.2bn to Rs42.7bn.

The allocation for secondary education is being enhanced from Rs68.5bn to Rs77.2bn for the next financial year.

With an increase of Rs5bn, next year's budget for college education is proposed to be Rs39.530bn.

To overcome the shortage of subject specialists in higher secondary schools, a provision of Rs200 million has been kept on account of hiring of subject specialist interns.

A specific provision of Rs500m has been kept for maintenance and repair of college buildings, too.

A provision of Rs500m has also been made for awarding scholarships to deserving students of Sindh in foreign universities under the College Education Department. In order to encourage meritorious and needy students to go for higher studies, a sum of Rs2bn has also been kept under the Sindh Educational Endowment Fund (SEEF) under the College Education Department. Also, a provision of Rs1.4bn has been kept to improve the standard of 11 cadet colleges across Sindh.

Funds amounting to Rs3.2bn have been proposed to be allocated in next year's budget for registration and examination expenses and for scholarship to high performing students of the year.

To impart quality education, two new community colleges at Sehwan and Bhan Saeedabad have been established under IBA Sukkur, while four IBA community colleges at Naushahro Feroze, Jacobabad, Dadu and Khairpur will be established at a cost of Rs380m next year.

An enhanced grant of Rs2.6bn for technical education and vocational training through the Sindh Technical Education and Vocational Authority and Rs1.2bn for the Human Research and Development Board have also been proposed.

In order to overcome the shortage of staff in schools, around 4,400 posts of different nomenclature have been placed at the disposal of the Education Department for appointment in the next financial year.

The Sindh government has taken a revolutionary step toward financial strengthening of 34,106 primary schools in Sindh. The specific cost centres with a budgetary allocation of Rs18.6bn for the next financial year have been created, the CM said. "Now, every school shall have its own cost centre and exclusive budget to be utilised by the head master/mistress without relying on the Taluka Education Officer," he explained.

The provision of funds for the existing 31 public sector universities, and nine independent campuses and institutions through the Sindh Higher Education Commission has also been increased to Rs42.2bn against last year's budget of Rs35.1bn. (By Shazia Hasan Dawn, 13, 14/06/2025)

### **Education underfunded**

The federal education budget has fallen to an all-time low of 0.8% of GDP, reflecting utter disregard for something that should be among every government's top priorities.

The number has steadily declined since 2018 — when it was 2% of GDP. That year is significant because it was when the PTI government took office, and despite its promises to improve life for the masses, funding for education saw only nominal increases in real terms, with the actual share of GDP actually contracting.

The PDM and PML-N governments criticised the PTI for this, only to do the exact same thing when they came to power. In fact, despite Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's much-publicised "education emergency" declaration last year, the government has actually slashed education expenditure by 29% in the first nine months of FY25, allocating a paltry Rs899.6 billion against Rs1,251.06 billion a year earlier. It is worth noting that the UN has called on all countries to spend between 4% and 6% of GDP on education.

This collapse in education funding coincides with a 20% hike in defence spending — the largest increase in a decade — following border clashes with India. While national security is vital, underfunding education will create even more security risks tomorrow. Studies show each additional school year boosts individual earnings by 9% and national productivity exponentially.

But it should not be forgotten that the biggest drain on the budget is actually debt servicing, which now accounts for over half of the federal budget, leaving social services, the bureaucracy and the military fighting over the rest.

While it is important to keep the debt in check, the most reliable way to actually bring it down in the long term is to build a future where economic growth is guaranteed — such as by having an educated workforce. Unfortunately, our leaders either cannot, or will not, plan that far ahead.

(By Editorial, The Express Tribune, 14, 26/06/2025)

### **KU controller of examinations 'removed'**

The University of Karachi's controller of examinations has been removed from his post, Dawn has learnt.

According to a letter, sent by the Sindh Universities and Boards Department to the university's vice-chancellor, Dr Syed Zafar Hussain's appointment was rescinded for "violating the prescribed procedures".

The development came after the Chief Minister's Inspection, Enquiries and Implementation Team Department (CMIE&ITD) recommended Dr Hussain's removal as the KU controller of examinations.



The letter, sent on June 17, 2025, stated that on a summary moved by the CM team, "the department recommends that the contractual appointment of Syed Zafar Hussain as controller of examination for a period of two years should be rescinded as it violates the prescribed procedures and the directives of the chief minister of Sindh".

*Dr Zafar Hussain claims he was appointed by varsity syndicate and only it can remove him from the post*

The letter also recommended that "the university should frame recruitment rules for the post of controller of examination and other positions in BS-17 and above. The recruitment against all posts should be done through competitive, transparent and merit-based process to attract talented young and qualified candidates." It further stated that the KU should strictly adhere to the university code.

The department has asked the university for a compliance report on this letter within seven days.

Although the letter did not mention this, sources said that Dr Hussain may have been removed because he was overage and reappointed after his retirement, which is against the rules of the university.

However, Dr Hussain told Dawn that he was removed following media reports, published in 2023, claiming that the university was filling bureaucratic posts despite facing a financial crisis. "My appointment has been rescinded due to such reports. That issue was reported in 2023 when I was a serving employee. I retired in August 2023 and after six months, I was given a six-month contract of controller examinations post by the Sindh government. Thereafter, I was appointed through the university's syndicate for a contractual period of two years."

He said there had been no inquiry against him and lamented that he was removed through a letter. "This is illegal. I was appointed through the syndicate and only the syndicate has the [power] to rescind my appointment, if at all," Dr Hussain said.

It is pertinent to mention that the Peoples Students Federation (PSF), the student wing of ruling Pakistan Peoples Party, had been pursuing a case against Dr Hussain's appointment, which it maintained was carried out in violation of the university rules.

A PSF office-bearer had earlier said that they had also approached the CM in this regard with plea to order an inquiry into the matter.

Teachers' bodies, including the Karachi University Teachers Society and the Federation of All Pakistan Universities Academic Staff Association (FAPUASA), Sindh, have long been protesting against the appointment of retired staff in varsities.

Talking to Dawn, FAPUASA-Pakistan vice president Dr Akhtiar Ghumro said "Our stand on this issue has always been clear that the retired employees reappointed in universities should be removed from their positions. The removal of Karachi University's controller of examination is a good decision, and we support it."

(By Waqas Ali Ranjha Dawn, 13, 26/06/2025)