



Daily The Spokesman

A Leading National Daily



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کہی کہ یہاں علی اللہ علیہ وسلم نے فرمایا میں
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(بخاری ص 6807 نمبر 6807)
Barkat Rice Mills
(Pvt) Limited



President gives assent to PIA Corporation (Conversion) (Repeal) Bill

President Asif Ali Zardari on Friday gave his assent to the Pakistan International Airlines Corporation (Conversion) (Repeal) Bill, 2026. Following the presidential approval, all the necessary legal formalities and requirements for the completion of the privatization process of Pakistan International Airlines Company Limited (PIACL) have been fulfilled.



Nawaz Sharif performs Umrah

Pakistan Muslim League (PML-N) chief Muhammad Nawaz Sharif has reached Jeddah from Geneva and later travelled to Makkah to perform Umrah. Pakistan's Ambassador to Saudi Arabia Ahmed Farooq, Consul General and PML-N officials welcomed the former prime minister at Jeddah's King Abdul Aziz International Airport.

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PM Signing Annual Budget

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif signing Annual Budget 2026-27 documents after its approval by the Federal Cabinet meeting at Parliament House on Friday.



Photo: Online

Sharif's Third Budget Aims for Economic Surge Post-Stabilization



The first two budgets, aligned with IMF commitments, necessitated difficult fiscal measures. Inflation has decreased from 38% to single digits, and the policy rate has dropped from 22.5% to 11%. Despite regional tensions, economic indicators are improving.

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif believes Pakistan's third budget will accelerate economic growth, as the economy has stabilized despite numerous challenges. He acknowledged the nation's patience during economic hardships, which helped in recovery.

The government will focus on renewable energy and water security, as well as consultations with provinces, acknowledging cooperation from Punjab, Balochistan, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He thanked coalition partners, including the PPP, for their support and highlighted positive negotiations with the IMF. The PM also discussed the second phase of CPEC with China.

Budget aimed at relief to public, reduction in tax burden: PM

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif Friday said the government presented the budget of relief and public welfare, reduced the burden on the salaried class and took steps for increasing exports, promoting industries and agricultural growth, investment and economic development.

would be directly delivered to the common man.

In a statement regarding the federal budget, he said, "I am immensely grateful to Allah Almighty, by whose grace and the prayers of the nation, we have achieved economic stability, and thanks to whom we have provided relief to the people in the budget today."

"Alhamdulillah, now the time of prosperity has begun," he remarked, adding, "The improvement and relief that I had promised you after the difficult period, and the relief that my nation truly deserves, has officially begun."

"I deeply thank every citizen of Pakistan who showed patience and forbearance in the most difficult circumstances and despite facing difficulties played a full role for the economic stability of our country," he added.

He thanked Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar, Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb, the entire economic team, Chief Ministers of the four provinces, and all the relevant institutions, whose tireless work, professional ability, and passion made this relief possible.

He said he had promised the people that after achieving economic stability, its fruits

"From providing the people with the facility of their own roof under the Prime Minister's Apna Ghar program to tax relief, to creating employment opportunities for the youth, reducing the burden on the middle class, and promoting business activities, your government has taken concrete and effective steps," he mentioned.

Budget 2026-27 Unveiled: GDP Growth Targeted at 4%, Inflation Projected at 8.2%

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb on Friday presented Pakistan's federal budget for fiscal year 2026-27, targeting GDP growth of 4% and projecting inflation at 8.2%, as the government seeks to sustain macroeconomic stability amid regional uncertainty.

The budget carries a total outlay of Rs18.77 trillion, up

from Rs17.6 trillion in the previous year. The federal deficit is projected at Rs7.02 trillion, or 3.6% of GDP, while the government targets a primary surplus of 2% of GDP.

Key macroeconomic targets The government projects GDP growth of 4% in FY27, compared to an estimated 3.7% in the outgoing year.

Inflation is projected at 8.2%, against 7% this year. Per capita

income has risen to \$1,901, the finance minister said, adding that foreign exchange reserves are sufficient to cover three months of imports.

Remittances are expected to reach \$41 billion by the close of the current fiscal year, with 92% now received through banking channels.

FBR's tax collection target for FY27 has been set at Rs15.26 trillion, up over 8% from

Rs14.13 trillion. Provinces will receive Rs8,848 billion from federal revenues. Non-tax revenues are projected at over Rs5.34 trillion.

Defence and debt Defence spending has been raised to over Rs3 trillion in FY27, up from Rs2.56 trillion last year.

"Defence spending has been increased considerably to make the country invincible due to

the uncertainty in the region," Aurangzeb said. He also highlighted that the defence sector has begun earning valuable foreign exchange, and described the strategic defence agreement with Saudi Arabia as a moment of national pride.

Rs8.054 trillion has been allocated for debt servicing, while Rs1.169 trillion has been set aside for pension expenses.

Continued on Page 7

Federal cabinet approves budget proposals for fiscal year 2026-27

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: The federal cabinet on Friday approved the budgetary proposals for the next fiscal year 2026-27, in a special meeting chaired by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif here.

The cabinet reviewed the proposals before giving a go-ahead for its presentation to the National Assembly for consideration and debate.

The prime minister signed the federal budget documents for the



fiscal year 2026-27 after their approval by the federal cabinet.

The budget documents were signed during the meeting of the federal cabinet. Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, along with other members of the government's economic team, was present on the occasion.

Following the cabinet's formal approval of the budget proposals, the prime minister endorsed the budget documents, completing a key procedural step ahead of the

budget's implementation process. At the National Assembly, Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb will unveil the annual federal budget.

According to the survey, Pakistan's economy rebounded with a robust 3.7% GDP growth, pushing the country's economic volume to a historic \$452.1 billion (Rs 126.9 trillion). Additionally, the country's per capita income witnessed a notable increase, rising to \$1,901 from \$1,751 in the previous fiscal year.

Sanaullah says opposition still welcome for budget talks

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister Rana Sanaullah stated that the opposition was repeatedly invited by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif for budget discussions but did not attend. He emphasized the government's commitment to dialogue and consultation, suggesting the opposition could also engage through the National

Assembly Speaker if direct talks were not preferred. Sanaullah reiterated that the Prime Minister's House remains open for budget-related talks. He also mentioned that the cabinet meeting focused exclusively on budget matters, and commented on the improved situation in Azad Kashmir, noting active communication channels between the federal government and provincial leadership.

Bilawal to skip budget session as PPP stages water protest in NA

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari will skip Friday's budget session due to dissatisfaction with the government's handling of the Gilgit-Baltistan issue and their attitude towards the PPP. The party believes it's not their responsibility to ensure quorum, with lawmakers free to attend individually. PPP members protested water shortages in the National Assembly, carrying placards and chanting slogans demanding water access.



This action highlights growing dissatisfaction with the federal government on multiple fronts, particularly Gilgit-Baltistan and water distribution, amidst rising political tensions within the coalition.

DPM Dar, EU Rep Kallas discuss recent developments regarding US-Iran understanding



City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister / Foreign Minister (DPM/FM), Senator Muhammad Ishaq Dar on Friday spoke with EU High Representative/Vice President Kaja Kallas on recent developments regarding United States-Iran understanding.

Both sides welcomed the progress achieved through sustained diplomatic engagement and expressed hope that these efforts will soon lead to a durable understanding and peaceful resolution, a DPM's Office news release said.

They reaffirmed that dialogue and diplomacy remain the only viable means to resolve conflicts and advance lasting peace and stability.

Both sides welcomed the progress achieved through sustained diplomatic engagement and expressed hope that these efforts will soon lead to a durable understanding and peaceful resolution, a DPM's Office news release said.

AJK PM chairs crucial budget meeting, focus on people-friendly fiscal plan



MUZAFFARABAD: Azad Jammu and Kashmir Prime Minister Faisal Mumtaz Rathore chaired an important meeting on the preparation of the upcoming fiscal year's budget. The meeting was attended by government ministers Chaudhry Qasim Majeed, Sardar Javed Ayub, Syed Bazal Ali Naqvi, Dewan Ali Khan Chughtai, Sardar Zia-ul-Qamar, the Chief Secretary, and the Inspector General of Police.

The meeting conducted a detailed review of various aspects of the upcoming fiscal year's budget and discussed matters related to develop-

ment and non-development expenditures, public welfare projects, provision of basic amenities, and financial discipline. The Finance Minister briefed the participants on the progress of budget preparation and available financial resources.

Prime Minister Faisal Mumtaz Rathore directed that the upcoming budget be made people-friendly, balanced, and aligned with development priorities to provide maximum relief to the people across the state. He said that despite limited resources, the government will continue practical measures to

address public issues, create employment opportunities, and improve education, health, infrastructure, and social sectors.

The Prime Minister stressed that transparency, financial responsibility, and public needs should be given top priority in the budget-making process. He instructed the relevant departments to include feasible proposals in the budget for the timely completion of development projects and delivery of public services, so that the goals of sustainable development of the state can be achieved.

The meeting agreed to adopt a

comprehensive strategy to make the upcoming budget in line with the expectations of the people of the state and to ensure economic stability.

Earlier, Chief Secretary Khushhal Khan and IGP Liaqat Ali Malik called on Prime Minister Faisal Mumtaz Rathore and discussed the overall situation in Azad Kashmir.

Meanwhile, the Prime Minister signed nearly 200 files related to administrative matters, resolving public-interest cases that had been pending for a long time. Of these, 150 files were employee appeals that had been pending since 2022.

RPO Faisalabad signs MoU with Cadet College, Faisalabad

Abdul Majid

FAISALABAD: RPO Faisalabad and Cadet College have signed an MoU to provide educational concessions and career development for police families' children. Police martyrs' children get a 100% tuition fee waiver, serving personnel's children get 50%, and retired officers' children receive a special discount on their first fee voucher. The agreement also offers preferential admissions, quality education, discipline, leadership development, career counseling, ISSB exam prep, and cybercrime awareness programs. RPO Faisalabad stated this aims to ease financial burdens and support police children's education.

RPO Sohail Sukhera added that the Faisalabad region police remained committed to supporting higher education opportunities for the children of martyrs, ghazis and serving personnel.



Tamgha-e-Imtiaz Holder Abid Lashari Proposes Children's Rehabilitation Center in Matiari



News Desk

MATIARI: Mr. Abid Lashari, Tamgha-e-Imtiaz and President NDF Pakistan, held a meeting with Chairman District Council Matiari, Mr. Makhdoom Ahmed Zaman and Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Yousif Shaikh.

During the meeting, Mr. Lashari discussed the urgent need for establishing a Rehabilitation Center for Children with Intellectual Disabilities in District Matiari. The proposal aims to provide specialized rehabilitation, therapy, and support services to children with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families.

The Deputy Commissioner and Chairman District Council appreciated the efforts of NDF Pakistan and encouraged the proposal for establishing an NDF Rehabilitation Center in Matiari.

Mr. Abid Lashari thanked the district administration and local leadership for their positive response and support toward promoting disability inclusion and rehabilitation services in the district.

Sikh pilgrims reach Gurdwara Panja Sahib; express satisfaction over arrangements

ISLAMABAD: Indian Sikh pilgrims visiting Pakistan to attend the commemorations of the martyrdom day of the 5th Sikh Guru, Guru Arjan Dev Ji, under the arrangements of the Evacuee Trust Property Board (ETPB), Ministry of Religious Affairs & Interfaith Harmony, have reached Gurdwara Panja Sahib Hasan Abdal.

The pilgrims expressed complete satisfaction over the arrangements of accommodation, langar (community meals), cleanliness, medical facilities, transport, and foolproof security. They thanked the Government of Pakistan, Chairman ETPB Qamar-uz-Zaman, Additional Secretary Shriners Nasser Mushtaq, and the administration.

They stated that they are being provided with world-class facilities in Pakistan and added that "our gurdwaras are now in better and more secure condition than before."

Additional Secretary Shriners Nasser Mushtaq said that, under the directions of Chairman ETPB Qamar-uz-Zaman, all possible facilities are being ensured for the pilgrims, and this visit reflects a strong example of promoting religious tourism and interfaith harmony in Pakistan.

According to the schedule, the pilgrims reached Gurdwara Panja Sahib after visiting Gurdwara Sacha Sauda Farooqabad, where they will stay for one day and perform their religious rituals.

Security arrangement

ISLAMABAD: Police commandos stand alert outside Parliament House building at Constitution Avenue during Budget 2026-27 session at the Parliament House in the Federal Capital.



Photo: Online

National and International Experts Discuss Challenges and Emerging Opportunities in Commercial Aviation

Bureau Report

LAHORE: The Institute of Aviation Studies (IAS) at the University of Management and Technology (UMT) organized the 2nd International Conference on Aviation, bringing together a distinguished gathering of national and international experts, industry professionals, academicians, researchers and students. The conference aimed to promote collaboration between academia and industry while addressing the challenges and future prospects of the aviation sector.

Major General (R) Khalil Dar, Vice Chancellor of Lahore

Garrison University, attended the conference as the Chief Guest. Rector UMT, Air Vice Marshal (R) Dr. Asif Raza, Pro-Rector Imperial College Dr. Saad Rehman, Air Commodore (R) Muhammad Atif, Director General Aviation Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Mr. Naeem Mahmood, Chief Engineer Pakistan International Airlines (PIA), Mr. Nisar Ahmed, APM Sialkot Airport, and Mr. Jamil Ahmad, Chairman PIFFA, participated as Guests of Honour.

The conference featured renowned international speakers including Prof. Dr. Ferhan Sengur (Türkiye), Prof.

Dr. Erhan Butun (Türkiye), Dr. Rashid Ali (UK), Dr. Leah Fox (UK) and Mr. Yousaf Hashmi from the United Arab Emirates. Through both virtual and in-person sessions, the speakers shared valuable insights into the current challenges, emerging trends and future outlook of commercial aviation.

Speaking on the occasion, Rector UMT Dr. Asif Raza emphasized that providing young researchers with opportunities for academic dialogue, research collaboration and practical guidance from industry experts is imperative. He noted that research, innovation and strong academi-



ia-industry linkages constitute the foundation of sustainable growth and development in the

aviation sector. The event concluded with a raffle draw, during which

Air Sial announced a complimentary return air ticket from Lahore to Skardu for one lucky

participant, adding excitement and making the closing session memorable for the attendees.

Silenced Voices, Broken Lands: The Cost of Ignoring Environmental Defenders

I am honored to have successfully completed the Business and Human Rights (BHR) Course at the Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights. This in-person learning experience has significantly deepened my understanding of the critical relationship between business practices, human rights obligations and environmental protection. It has further strengthened my commitment to advancing justice, accountability, and protection for vulnerable communities.

During my studies, I explored the work of the International Human Rights Service (IHRS), Geneva, and

reflected on urgent global realities that demand stronger collective action. One of the most alarming insights is that between 2012 and 2024, 2,253 land and environmental defenders were killed or disappeared while protecting their land rights and environment. These defenders stand at the front-line of climate justice, yet continue to face extreme risks.

According to Global Witness findings, attacks on defenders linked to business activities occur across almost every corporate sector and every region of the world. Alarming, 42% of attacks occur in Latin America and the Caribbean, while 30% take place in Asia and the Pacific, highlighting a truly global crisis. Even

more concerning is that three-quarters (75%) of all attacks target climate, land and environmental defenders, showing how deeply environmental protection is under threat. In 2025 alone, 53 defenders were killed for speaking out against business-related harms, and nearly 30% of them were Indigenous peoples, reflecting the disproportionate risks faced by Indigenous communities who protect their lands and ecosystems.

The most common form of repression is not always physical violence

but judicial harassment, including criminalization and Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPPs), which account for 52% of recorded attacks. These legal tools are increasingly used to silence dissent and restrict civic space.

Key sectors driving these violations include mining, fossil fuels and agribusiness, all of which are strongly linked to deforestation and environmental degradation. In addition, attacks have also been recorded against defenders raising concerns about arms and weapons

companies, showing the expanding scope of risk across industries.

Among the most affected projects and companies in 2025 were the East African Crude Oil Pipeline (Uganda and Tanzania), Grasberg Mine (Indonesia), Leonardo (Italy), Cobre Panama Mine (Panama) and Dinant (Honduras). Notably, both major mining projects involve copper extraction, a material considered essential for energy transition highlighting the complex tension between development and rights. In cases where perpetrators were identified, 86% were state actors, including police, judicial systems and local authorities. This raises serious concerns about governance and accountability, especially when state

mechanisms are indirectly influenced by corporate interests. The growing overlap between security-driven governance, corporate influence and digital technologies restricting civic space is further shrinking space for peaceful protest and advocacy worldwide. As a Human Rights Defender, this learning reinforces my belief that Business and Human Rights is not only an academic field it is a global necessity. Protecting defenders, ensuring corporate accountability and strengthening international human rights systems must remain urgent priorities for a just and sustainable future.

The writer is a defender and international researcher on human rights



Nazia Naz



Islamabad

30° - 38° Clear

SERVICES

Namaz Timings

Fajr 3:13 am
Zohr 12:08 pm
Asr 5:08 pm
Maghrib 7:19 pm
Isha 9:02 pm

EMERGENCY

Rescue (Police) 15
Bomb Disposal 15
Fire Services Rawalpindi/
Islamabad 1122 & 16
Emergency Ambulance 1122 &
& Rescue Services 4451122
Motorway Police 9266044
Motorway Police 9270601-20

Women Police Stations

Islamabad 9222596
Rawalpindi 9270601-20

ENQUIRY

Edhi Ambulance 115
PIA Flight Info 114
PIA Cargo 9280979
Railway Inquiry 117
Railway Exchange 9270831-5
WASA Rawalpindi 5555489
CAA 9281092

HOSPITALS

CMH 561111
MH 561116
MH 561116
Cantt Hospital 9270907-11
DHQ 5556311-4
RGH 9290301-7
Holy Family 9290322-7
PIMS 9261170-79
Polyclinic 9218300-09
Shifa International 4603666

DEPARTMENTS

CDA 9221334-43
CDA 9208301-04
Met Office 9250360-6
RDA 5555864
TMA 5770886
Cantonment Board 9270151-3
Islamabad Metropolitan
Corporation 9209224
Potohar Town 9209224
Rawal Town 5773343

COMPLAINTS

Water Tanker Service
E-7, F-10 & F-11 9204654
G-5, G-6, G-7, G-8 9203883
G-9, G-10, G-11, G-12, H-8 9266316
Wapda Islamabad 9217579-80
Sui Gas Complaint 119, 9272249
Wasa Water Tank
Rawalpindi 0331-5022125

*World Day
Against
Child
Labour
observed
across
country*

ISLAMABAD: The World Day Against Child Labour was observed across Pakistan on Thursday with renewed calls for collective efforts to eliminate child labour and ensure every child's right to education, protection, and a dignified future.

Government officials, human rights organizations, civil society groups, and international partners marked the day through awareness campaigns, seminars, and public messages highlighting the need to protect children from exploitation and hazardous work.

In his message on the occasion, Federal Minister for Human Rights Azam Nazeer Tarar emphasized that child labour deprives children of their fundamental rights and limits their opportunities for a better future.

He reaffirmed the government's commitment to strengthening laws, policies, and enforcement mechanisms aimed at preventing child exploitation.

Chairperson of the Benazir Income Support Programme, Rubina Khalid, said that ending child labour is essential for building a just, prosperous, and developed society.

She noted that Pakistan's Constitution prohibits forced labour and exploitation of children and called for greater collaboration among government institutions, communities, and families. Speakers at various events stressed that poverty, lack of access to education, and social inequalities remain key drivers of child labour.

They urged stakeholders to work together to ensure that children are in schools rather than workplaces.

The World Day Against Child Labour is observed annually on June 12 to raise awareness about child labour and promote efforts to eliminate it worldwide.

CM Complaints Cell Team arrives in Bahawalpur to hold 'Khuli Kachehri' to resolve public complaints

Bureau Report

LAHORE, Chief Minister Punjab's Complaints Cell team reached Bahawalpur to hold open court (Khuli Kachehri) at Ghotvi Hall, Abbasi Campus, Islamic University Bahawalpur, in order to immediately resolve public complaints. Chairperson of the Chief Minister's Complaints

Cell, Saima Farooq, heard citizens' complaints related to revenue department, police, health, education, sanitation, and sewerage; and issued directives on spot to resolve them.

She said that as directed by Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif, they are providing immediate relief to the public; and vowed that continuous follow-up will be conducted on applica-



tions; and they will not rest until the issues are resolved. She highlighted that open courts are an effective means of providing prompt solutions to public needs.

She noted that in total 328 public complaints have been received, out of which, over 90 applications relate to Revenue Department, while 250 pertain to other departments.

The Commissioner, Deputy Commissioner, DPO, and all relevant officers participated in the open court; where directives were issued for immediate action on all the received applications.

Chairperson CM Complaint Cell Saima

Farooq said that negligence in resolving public complaints will not be tolerated, as legitimate complaints will not be ignored. She noted that through regular monitoring of applications, citizens will receive genuine relief.

Bahawalpur Commissioner Irfan Ali Kathia said that action on public applications will be taken in a transparent manner.

Deputy Commissioner Syed Hasan Raza noted that a timeline has been given to officers for resolving complaints received at the open court. He said that at Chief Minister's Complaints Cell open court, practical steps are taken for immediate resolution of citizens' problems.

High level Meeting

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Communications Abdul Aleem Khan presided over high level meeting during his visit to Motorway Police Headquarters.



Deputy Commissioner Inspects Shahbaz Sharif Hospital, Focuses on Patient Care

Asim Tanveer

MULTAN: Deputy Commissioner Multan, Muhammad Noman Siddique, conducted an unannounced inspection of Shahbaz Sharif Hospital to assess patient care, medicine availability, hygiene, and administrative operations.

He toured various hospital sections, spoke with patients and their families about their treatment, and received briefings from Medical Superintendent Dr. Tanzeel-ur-Rehman and Additional Medical Superintendent Dr. M. B. Khalid.

They informed the Deputy Commissioner that the hospital, following Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif's vision, offers 24-hour emergency services, handles approximately 3000 patients daily, and provides advanced diagnostic services like ultrasound, X-ray, and CT scans.



The hospital ensures a consistent supply of all necessary medicines, including free insulin for diabetic patients, and offers free surgical procedures as per the Chief Minister's directives. Deputy Commissioner Siddique

emphasized the importance of quality and prompt medical care, zero tolerance for negligence, maintaining hospital cleanliness, ensuring continuous medicine availability, and treating patients respectfully, underscoring that providing

excellent healthcare is a top priority for the Punjab government.

He instructed hospital officials to regularly oversee all departments to maximize patient convenience and treatment quality.

18th Amendment's Incomplete Agenda: Fiscal Hurdles for Provinces Highlighted

Iram Asim

MULTAN: Women University Multan's Economics Department hosted "Beyond the 7th National Finance Commission: Provincial Fiscal Capacity, Equality, and the 18th Amendment's Incomplete Agenda."

Vice Chancellor Dr. Shahida Batool highlighted ongoing fiscal limitations for provinces post-18th Amendment, hindering regional equality.

Keynote speaker Dr. Azra Batool argued the 7th NFC's 57.5% provincial share is insufficient and the 18th Amendment's agenda is incomplete due to inadequate funding for devolved sectors like health and education.

She urged re-evaluating NFC award criteria (tax power, population, poverty, revenue) for the 8th award. Discussions



covered provinces boosting tax collection, resource-rich provinces' low growth, and federal financial control limiting provincial autonomy.

Participants concluded that increased provincial financial powers and constitutional amendments are crucial for equality in the 8th NFC Award.

AC Erum Shahzadi, DSP Javed Akhtar Lead Meeting on Muharram Arrangements

Zafar Chishti

TOBA TEK SINGH: A meeting chaired by Assistant Commissioner Erum Shahzadi and DSP Javed Akhtar was held to ensure peace, religious harmony, and security during Muharram. Key departments, the Peace Committee, scholars, and representatives reviewed arrangements for processions, including security, sanitation, lighting, and traffic. Shahzadi stressed collective responsibility for maintaining peace and urged scholars to promote inter-sect harmony. She directed departments to ensure cleanliness, functional lighting, and unimpeded routes, along with uninterrupted essential services. DSP Akhtar assured strict security, surveillance, and additional police deployment at sensitive locations, vowing to prevent any disruption. Participants committed to coordinated efforts for a peaceful Muharram observance, safeguarding citizens and property.

Punjab accelerates preparations to launch athletes' portal

News Desk

LAHORE: Punjab Youth Affairs and Sports Department has accelerated the preparations to develop Punjab Rising Star Portal, a modern databank of Punjab's athletes. In this regard, Secretary Youth Affairs and Sports Punjab Fazal ur Rehman chaired a meeting at the Punjab Stadium on Friday.



During the meeting, a team from the Punjab Information Technology Board (PITB) briefed about the portal's multiple features and implementation plan.

Addressing the meeting, Secretary Youth Affairs and Sports Punjab said that Punjab Rising Star Portal is an innovative digital platform through which the athletes from across the Punjab can register themselves and showcase their sporting achievements online. "The portal will be opened for athletes in near future".

Additional Secretary Sports Shabbir Hussain Cheema and Director Admin Abid Shaikat attended the meeting in person while Director Youth Affairs M Fahad and members of the PITB team participated through video link.

Four Suspects Arrested, Narcotics and Liquor Seized in Attock

Raza Naqvi

ATTOCK: Attock Police conducted successful operations against drug traffickers and arrested four suspects, recovering 3,800 grams of hashish, 280 grams of crystal meth (ice), 160 grams of heroin, 60 grams of opium, and 10 liters of liquor.

According to details, Assistant Sub-Inspector Yasir Ali of Rango Police Station, along with his team, recovered 2,000 grams of hashish from Imtiaz Ahmad, son of Muhammad Riaz, a resident of Waisa, Tehsil Hazro, during a checking operation.

In a separate operation, Assistant Sub-Inspector Saeed-ur-Rehman of New Airport Police Station recovered 1,800 grams of hashish from Mubashar, son of Mir Rehman, a resident of Qutbal, Tehsil Fateh Jang.

Meanwhile, Assistant Sub-Inspector Fida Hussain of Attock City Police Station recovered 280 grams of crystal meth (ice), 160 grams of heroin, and 60 grams of opium from Muhammad Aqeel, son of Hussain Gul, a resident near the NADRA Office in Attock.

In another action, Assistant Sub-Inspector Jameel Akhtar of Bahter Police Station arrested Muhammad Saeed, son of Allah Dad, a resident of Bahter, Tehsil Fateh Jang, after recovering 10 liters of liquor from his possession.

Police have registered separate cases against all four suspects and initiated further legal proceedings.

Two Killed, Two Injured in Car-Truck Collision Near Kharpa Interchange on CPEC

Raza Naqvi

ATTOCK: Two people lost their lives and two others sustained injuries in a tragic road accident on the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) near Kharpa Interchange in Pindi Gheb Tehsil on Friday.

According to rescue officials, a car traveling from Bhakkar to Rawalpindi collided with a truck moving ahead of it near the Kharpa Interchange. As a result of the collision, two occupants of the car died on the spot, while two others suffered injuries.

Upon receiving information about the accident, Rescue 1122 teams rushed to the scene and launched immediate rescue operations. The injured were provided first aid before being shifted to the Tehsil Headquarters Hospital, Pindi Gheb, for further medical treatment.

The bodies of the deceased were transported to the Tehsil Headquarters Hospital, Pindi Gheb, through an ambulance of the Frontier Works Organization (FWO). Authorities are investigating the circumstances surrounding the accident.

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Trump's Peace and Steal Deal Paradox

In one of the most remarkable diplomatic developments of the year, President Donald Trump announced that the United States and Iran had reached what he described as a "great settlement" and suggested that a formal signing ceremony would take place in Europe within days. According to Trump, the agreement had been approved by all relevant parties and would mark the successful conclusion of a conflict that had shaken global markets, disrupted energy supplies, and threatened to engulf the region in a wider war. Financial markets immediately responded with optimism. Investors interpreted Trump's declaration as evidence that diplomacy had finally triumphed over military confrontation. Oil prices stabilized, stock markets gained strength, and hopes emerged that one of the most dangerous geopolitical crises in recent memory was approaching a peaceful resolution.

Yet within hours of Trump's announcement, a remarkable contradiction emerged. Iran's Foreign Ministry publicly rejected the notion that a final agreement had been reached. Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei stated that no definitive settlement had yet been approved and that the matter remained under review by the country's decision-making institutions. According to Tehran, discussions were continuing, and reports regarding an imminent signing ceremony were premature.

Soon afterward, a second challenge to Trump's narrative emerged from Israel. According to a senior Israeli official quoted by Israeli media, Jerusalem had not been informed of any finalized U.S.-Iran agreement. The statement

appeared to directly contradict Trump's assertion that all concerned parties had approved the arrangement.

The result is an extraordinary diplomatic puzzle. The United States president says a deal exists and will soon be signed. Iran says no final agreement has been reached. Israel says it has no knowledge of such an agreement. Rarely has the international community witnessed such dramatically different descriptions of the same diplomatic process.

These conflicting narratives raise important questions. Is Trump announcing a political understanding that still awaits formal approval? Is he attempting to create momentum by publicly declaring success before negotiations are complete? Or are the parties engaged in a carefully coordinated diplomatic choreography in which public positions differ from private negotiations? Whatever the answer, the contradictions reveal how fragile and complex modern diplomacy has become.

The uncertainty surrounding the agreement is particularly significant because it follows months of military confrontation. The conflict created severe economic consequences throughout the world. Energy markets became volatile. Inflationary pressures intensified. Businesses postponed investments. Consumers paid higher prices for fuel and essential goods.

At the same time that he announced the agreement, President Trump made another revelation that generated world-

wide attention. He claimed that the United States had been secretly moving millions of barrels of oil associated with Venezuela and Iran through strategic waterways. According to Trump, American military capabilities had enabled these operations while preventing adversaries from interfering.

During his remarks, President Trump made statements that critics interpreted as an admission that Iranian oil had been secretly intercepted and diverted during the period of confrontation. According to his account, large quantities of oil allegedly reached international markets despite Iranian efforts to protect their exports. The President portrayed this as evidence of American operational superiority and an economic success for the United States.

He also referred to arrangements involving Venezuelan oil supplies, describing how American energy infrastructure had benefited from increased access to foreign crude. His comments suggested that U.S. refineries were operating at high capacity and generating substantial economic returns.

This goes far beyond merely moving oil through contested waterways, but amounts to the appropriation of resources that belong to sovereign nations and, ultimately, to the people of those countries. These valuable national assets associated with Iran and Venezuela were taken and utilized for the economic benefit of the United States while the populations of those countries continue to endure severe economic hardship.

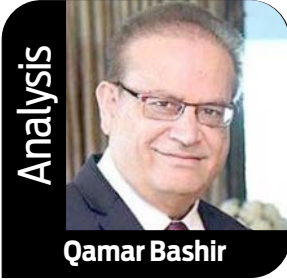
What has troubled many observers is not only the claim itself but also the apparent pride with which it was presented. During the President's remarks, those surrounding him appeared to applaud the operation as a strategic success. Their reaction conveyed a troubling message: that the acquisition of resources belonging to weaker nations is considered acceptable when carried out by a powerful state. Such actions would contribute to making wealthy countries wealthier while depriving already struggling populations of resources that could otherwise support economic development, public services, and improved living standards.

From this perspective, the issue extends beyond geopolitics and energy security. It becomes a question of ethics, sovereignty, and international justice. If the resources of one nation can be used for the benefit of another without the clear consent of its people and government, the principles of equality among nations and respect for sovereign rights are placed at risk.

The international community must apply the same standards to powerful countries that it expects from smaller states, ensuring that natural resources remain the property of the nations and peoples to whom they belong.

The timing of the peace initiative is equally significant. Many observers believe that economic realities played a major role in bringing all sides back to the negotiating table. Rising energy prices were creating inflationary pressures. Transportation costs increased. Food prices rose. Businesses faced uncertainty. Ordinary citizens felt the impact

Continued on Page 7



Analysis

Qamar Bashir

10th China-South Asia Exposition (CSA Expo)

The Ambassador, together with Ms. Yang Yang, Vice Governor of Yunnan Province, also inaugurated the Pakistan Pavilion at the expo. The inauguration formed part of activities commemorating the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Pakistan and China. On the occasion, Ambassador Hashmi highlighted the significance of this historic milestone, the enduring strength of Pakistan-China All-Weather Strategic Cooperative Partnership, and the need to leverage opportunities offered by such platforms to further expand bilateral cooperation in trade, investment, industrial development, and people-to-people exchanges.

Pakistan's participation in this year's exposition was robust, featuring 130 companies and 327 exhibitors, underscoring the upward momentum of Pakistan-China economic cooperation and reflecting the strong interest of Pakistani businesses in exploring trade, investment, and market opportunities in China.

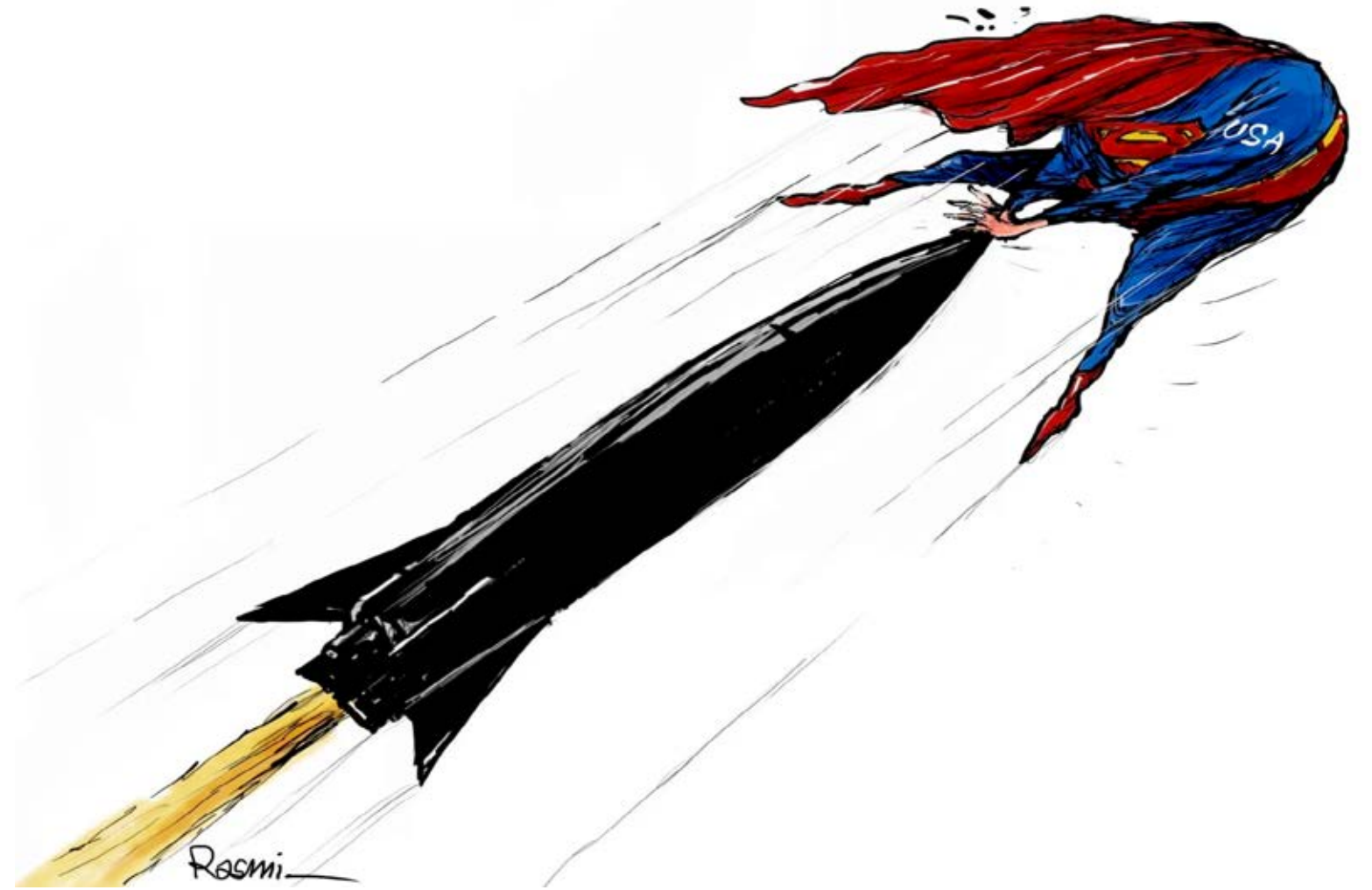
The Ambassador and the Vice Governor toured the booths of Pakistani exhibitors; interacted with business representatives from diverse sectors, reviewed a wide range of Pakistani products, discussed export prospects, and encouraged exhibitors to leverage the expo as an important platform for strengthening commercial partnerships and expanding access to the Chinese market.

Ambassador Hashmi also addressed the 7th China-South Asia Cooperation Forum, held under the theme "Strengthening Partnership for a Community with a Shared Future for Neighboring Countries." The Forum was attended by Governor of Yunnan, senior dignitaries from the South Asia region including Ministers, senior Chinese officials, provincial leaders, members of the diplomatic corps, and representatives from South Asian countries.

In his remarks, Ambassador Hashmi described the Pakistan-China All-Weather Strategic Cooperative Partnership, anchoring mutual trust, support and respect, as a model for South Asian countries. Reflecting on the future of regional collaboration, he highlighted South Asia's immense economic and demographic potential and called for a renewed China-South Asia development partnership founded on peaceful coexistence, enhanced connectivity, sustainable development, and shared prosperity. He underscored the transformative role of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) in advancing infrastructure development, economic growth, and regional connectivity, while reaffirming Pakistan's commitment to strengthening economic and trade cooperation with China and other regional partners.

On the sidelines of the expo, the Ambassador also engaged leading Chinese media outlets, where he shared Pakistan's perspectives on bilateral relations, regional connectivity, economic cooperation, and the larger themes of sustainable development, globalization and fair trade.

The Ambassador's engagements in Kunming reflected Pakistan's steadfast commitment to advancing economic diplomacy and deepening trade, investment, and development partnerships with China and the broader South Asian region. The events provided a valuable platform to showcase Pakistan's economic strengths, expand high-level engagement, and identify new avenues for practical cooperation. These interactions are expected to further reinforce Pakistan-China economic collaboration and contribute to greater regional connectivity, development, and shared prosperity.



Cartoon by Amjad Rasmi. (Courtesy of Ashraf Al-Awsat)

Maritime Delimitation in East Asia and Its Implications for Indian Ocean Geopolitics

The recent decision by the Philippines and Japan to initiate formal negotiations on maritime boundary delimitation in waters east of Taiwan has attracted considerable international attention. While some reports have incorrectly referred to South Korea as a party to the negotiations, the latest developments primarily involve the Philippines and Japan, whose Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) overlap in areas governed by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). The move represents another significant effort by regional states to clarify maritime boundaries through legal and diplomatic means rather than coercion.

At first glance, a maritime delimitation process in the Western Pacific may appear geographically distant from the Indian Ocean. However, the implications are far-reaching. Maritime boundary agreements establish precedents for the management of contested waters, resource sharing, navigation rights, and strategic competition. These issues are equally relevant to critical chokepoints such as the Bab-el-Mandab Strait and the Strait of Hormuz, through which a substantial portion of global trade and energy supplies pass.

Under UNCLOS, coastal states are entitled to a territorial sea extending up to 12 nautical miles and an Exclusive Economic Zone extending up to 200 nautical miles

from their coastlines. When maritime claims overlap, states are encouraged to negotiate equitable boundaries. The Philippines and Japan have stated that their negotiations will be conducted in accordance with international law, reflecting a broader trend among maritime nations to seek legal solutions to overlapping claims. Recent Chinese objections to these talks underscore the strategic significance of maritime delimitation in contemporary geopolitics.

The importance of maritime boundaries is not merely legal. Approximately 90 percent of global trade by volume is transported by sea, making freedom of navigation and maritime stability essential for the global economy. The Indo-Pacific region, stretching from East Asia to the western Indian Ocean, has become the principal theatre of twenty-first-century maritime competition. Consequently, developments in one part of the region often influence strategic calculations elsewhere.

The Strait of Hormuz remains one of the world's most critical maritime chokepoints. Located between Iran and Oman, it serves as the primary gateway for oil exports from the Persian Gulf. According to energy market estimates, nearly one-fifth of global petroleum consumption passes through the Strait of Hormuz every day. Any disruption to navigation in these waters can immediately affect global energy prices and economic stability.

Similarly, the Bab-el-Mandab Strait connects the Red Sea with the Gulf of Aden

and the Indian Ocean. The waterway is only about 29 kilometres wide at its narrowest point and serves as a vital route linking Europe and Asia through the Suez Canal. An estimated 10-12 per cent of global trade and a significant proportion of container traffic transit through this corridor annually. Recent security incidents involving commercial shipping in the Red Sea have highlighted the vulnerability of this strategic maritime passage.

The connection between East Asian maritime delimitation and these Indian Ocean chokepoints lies in the evolving concept of rules-based maritime governance. When states successfully negotiate maritime boundaries based on international law, they reinforce norms that contribute to predictability and stability in global waters. Conversely, unresolved disputes create opportunities for confrontation, militarization, and disruption of commercial shipping routes.

The Philippines-Japan initiative also reflects the growing emphasis on coalition-building among maritime democracies. Countries across the Indo-Pacific increasingly recognize that secure sea lanes are indispensable for economic growth. Japan depends heavily on energy imports passing through Hormuz and Bab-el-Mandab, while the Philippines relies on secure maritime trade routes for commerce and economic development. Their cooperation therefore has implications that extend beyond East Asia.

For India, the developments are particularly relevant. India's strategic location places

Continued on Page 7

The Woman Who Taught a Village to Believe in Its Daughters

In the village of Langar, tucked away in Tehsil Fateh Jang of District Attock, stands a school that tells a story far bigger than its walls. It is a story of perseverance, community trust, and one teacher's lifelong commitment to educating girls.

For thirty-six years, Ms. Robina Begum served at Government Girls Primary School Langar, now upgraded to an elementary school. When she began her career, the situation was very different. The school had limited facilities, and many families were still hesitant about sending their daughters to school. For some, girls' education seemed unnecessary; for others, it was simply not a priority.

Rather than becoming discouraged, Ms. Robina chose a different path. She patiently engaged with parents, visited homes, and encouraged families to think differently about their daughters' future. Change came slowly, but it came.

The school's growth reflected that gradual transformation. With support from local residents, Ms. Robina helped mobilize resources for the construction of classrooms. Contributions were often modest—a few rupees, building materials, or voluntary labour—but together they made a remarkable difference. Over the years, ten classrooms were added to the school.

What emerged was more than a larger building. It was a learning environment where girls could study with dignity and confidence. Classrooms replaced overcrowded spaces, and education became an increasingly accepted part of village life.

The story of Ms. Robina Begum illustrates an important truth: meaningful change is often the result of patient, consistent effort rather than dramatic interventions. She did not possess extraordinary resources or influence. What she had was persistence, credibility within the community, and an unwavering belief in the value of education.

As Nobel Peace Prize laureate Malala Yousafzai famously observed, "One child, one teacher, one book, and one pen can change the world." In many ways, Ms. Robina's career reflects that idea. Through decades of service, she demonstrated how a dedicated teacher can shape not only individual lives but also the attitudes and aspirations of an entire community.

Three years ago, she retired after completing thirty-six years of service. Her retirement passed quietly, much like her career. There were no grand celebrations or public tributes. Yet the impact of her work remains visible every day in the school she helped build and in the generations of girls who now pursue an education with confidence.

At a time when public recognition often goes to those in prominent positions, it is worth remembering people like Ms. Robina Begum. Their contributions may not attract headlines, but they leave lasting marks on the communities they serve.

Her legacy is visible in every classroom filled with students, every exercise book carried home after school, and every family that now sees education for girls not as an exception, but as an expectation. Not all heroes receive awards or public acclaim. Some leave behind something far more valuable: opportunities that continue to benefit others long after their work is done. The light that Ms. Robina Begum helped kindle in Langar continues to shine, illuminating paths that once seemed beyond reach.

The author is an educator, social awareness advocate, and the voice behind several impactful online campaigns aimed at reviving empathy and moral consciousness among youth. He regularly writes on issues of social decay, educational reform, and the urgent need for character-building in modern societies. He tweets @ToleranceAdvocate.



Analysis

Muhammad Rabnawaz Awan

RCCI welcomes relief measures, calls for stronger industrial support

Commerce Desk

RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) has termed the Federal Budget 2026-27 a mixed budget, containing both positive measures and areas that require further attention.

RCCI President Usman Shaukat said that the reduction in taxes for the salaried class and the decrease in super tax are welcome steps. He also appreciated the tax relief provided to the IT sector, noting its vital role in promoting exports and employment.

He welcomed the allocation of Rs. 88 billion under the Export Finance Scheme, describing it as a positive initiative. However, he emphasized that the allocation should be further enhanced if the government aims to significantly increase exports. He also appreciated the proposal to abolish duties on life-saving medicines, calling it a pro-public measure.

RCCI Group Leader Sohail Altaf stated that while the budget includes some encouraging measures, it lacks a comprehensive strategy for industrial growth and revival. He noted that no significant initiative has been announced to improve the ease of doing business, which remains a key concern for the business community.

The RCCI leadership observed that



there is still a lack of clarity regarding sales tax measures. Overall, they described the budget as balanced, with neither major cause for celebration nor serious concern. However, they noted that the budget does not

provide a clear roadmap for reducing inflation.

Former RCCI President Raja Amer Iqbal welcomed the incentives announced for the real estate sector, particularly the relief in prop-

erty transactions. He expressed hope that the government's plan to utilize provincial resources for defense and administrative expenditures would help reduce dependence on additional borrowing in the future.

Saudia Records World's Highest On-Time Performance in May 2026, Reinforcing Service Excellence for Pakistan Market



Commerce Desk

KARACHI: The national flag carrier of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, has achieved a new global milestone in operational excellence. The airline ranked first among airlines worldwide for on-time performance in both departure and arrival rates in May 2026, according to the latest report by Cirium, the leading global aviation analytics provider.

The airline recorded an on-time departure rate of 92.30% and an on-time arrival rate of 90.12%, operating 13,669 flights across its network of over 100 destinations across four continents.

The achievement comes during one of Saudia's most demanding operational periods, as the airline continued to manage scheduled operations alongside the arrival phase of the 2026 Hajj season, the transportation of pilgrims

from around the world, and the Eid Al-Adha holiday period.

This performance was driven by integrated planning and execution across Saudia's operational teams, supported by advanced digital systems and AI-enabled solutions that enhance operational efficiency, improve readiness, and support proactive decision-making.

For guests traveling from Pakistan, the achievement reflects Saudia's

continued commitment to delivering reliable and seamless connectivity between the Kingdom and key Pakistani cities. As one of the leading carriers serving the Pakistan-Saudi Arabia market, particularly during peak Umrah and Hajj travel periods, Saudia's industry-leading punctuality helps ensure a smoother travel experience for thousands of Pakistani pilgrims, expatriates, business travelers, and visitors throughout the year.

Homage Paid to Renowned Broadcaster Syed Abid Rizvi



City Desk

KARACHI: The Arts Council of Pakistan Karachi hosted a condolence reference for the late Syed Abid Rizvi, a respected broadcaster, writer, and social activist. President Muhammad Ahmed Shah remembered Rizvi as a compassionate, spiritually devoted, and literature-loving individual who significantly contributed to the Arts Council and World Urdu Conference, especially in supporting visiting Indian writers. Prof. Sahar Ansari highlighted Rizvi's energetic participation in literary events and his role in strengthening the Anjuman Taraqqi-e-Urdu. Journalist Hassan Abbas spoke of Rizvi's profound sincerity, his habit of late-night writing, and his forgiving nature.

Dr. Fatima Hassan recalled their close friendship, forged through literary pursuits, and praised Rizvi's supportive role in her life and his services to the Anjuman. Rizvi's son, Syed Sohail Rizvi, shared details of his father's deep Islamic faith, passion for knowledge, and dedication to helping others, expressing gratitude for the memorial. Owais Adeb Ansari lauded Rizvi's transformative impact on the Anjuman Taraqqi-e-Urdu, noting his embodiment of Lucknow's cultural traditions and his rare sincerity.

Current Economic Policies Are Not the Solution; Electoral and Economic Reforms Are Essential, Says Awaam Pakistan Party



City Desk

RAWALPINDI: Awaam Pakistan Party Central Vice President Chaudhry Inam Zafar and Additional General Secretary Hafiz Usman Abbasi strongly criticized the federal government's economic policies and the 2026-27 budget, stating that instead of providing relief to the public, the government is imposing additional financial burdens on them.

They said that the people are already facing inflation, rising taxes, and economic hardships, while the government continues to maintain unnecessary powers and expenditures.

According to them, current policies contradict the government's claims of austerity and fiscal discipline. They further argued that the existing system lacks the capacity to resolve the country's economic and political challenges.

In their statement, the leaders endorsed the stance of Awaam Pakistan Party chief Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, saying that public confidence in the electoral system has been severely damaged and that genuine democratic and electoral reforms are essential to restore trust.

Referring to concerns raised by the party's Secretary General Miftah Ismail regarding the federal budget, they said that instead of reducing unnecessary government expenditures and bringing the undocumented economy into the tax net, the government is placing additional burdens on the salaried class, registered businesses, and citizens who already pay taxes.

They emphasized that salaried individuals and documented businesses have already paid a heavy price for economic stability and therefore deserve relief. Chaudhry Inam Zafar and Hafiz Usman Abbasi further stated that Pakistan's undocumented cash economy is estimated to exceed Rs. 11 trillion, and bringing it into the tax net could significantly increase government revenue.

Ch. Zulfiqar Ali Anjum, Industry, Service, and Patriotism



Analysis
Shakil Anjum

Last day, an important and purposeful meeting was held with Chairman SM Group of Industries, Chaudhry Zulfiqar Ali Anjum, at his office. The discussion centered on key themes including industrial development, promotion of exports, expansion of employment opportunities, and strengthening of the national economy. It was emphasized during the meeting that Pakistan's economic progress is only possible when all sectors—including industry, trade, and media—play their effective role in mutual harmony.

Chaudhry Zulfiqar Ali Anjum recently returned to Pakistan after participating in an international industrial exhibition, Interpack 2026, held in Germany in May. Sharing his detailed observations and industrial insights from this global experience, he stated that the world's industry is

rapidly moving toward advanced technology. According to him, the use of Servo Motors, PLCs, Sensors, and Automated Control Systems in industrial production has now become indispensable, as these technologies have significantly improved not only production speed but also quality, precision, and efficiency.

He further stated that modern factories have moved beyond traditional mechanical systems of gears and pulleys and have fully entered the era of automation and smart industry. Unfortunately, educational institutions have not been able to keep pace with these global transformations, resulting in a severe shortage of skilled manpower, which has become a major challenge.

Chaudhry Zulfiqar Ali Anjum noted that the most important message of this international exhibition was the concept of "Future Skills." According to this vision, the nations that will succeed in the future are those that equip their younger generation with modern skills. He emphasized that today's industries require a workforce skilled in artificial intelligence, robotics, automation, digital manufacturing, and interdisciplinary thinking.

He also expressed regret that the traditional education

system is increasingly failing to meet industrial requirements. He stressed that students must not be limited to theoretical education alone; practical training has become essential so that they can understand how machines operate, how they are manufactured, and how they contribute effectively to production processes.

He added that technologies such as Servo Systems, PLC-based automation, and sensor-based fully automated control systems have become the backbone of modern industry. However, educational institutions in our country have not yet aligned with this pace of development, resulting in graduates lacking the required practical skills.

In this context, he also highlighted an important observation: in our society, young graduates generally prefer comfortable office environments, air-conditioned rooms, and limited responsibilities. In contrast, in developed countries, engineers and technical staff actively work in the field and directly participate in production processes.

According to Chaudhry Zulfiqar Ali Anjum, Pakistan's youth must also move beyond traditional desk jobs and adopt practical industrial work, technical expertise, and field exper-



ience as their core approach. This mindset will not only ensure individual progress but also contribute significantly to national economic stability.

During the meeting, he also elaborated in detail on his practical experiences, industrial journey, and commitment to national service, reflecting a business vision that prioritizes national interest over personal gain. He shared that after completing his education, he gained practical training in food factories across Lahore, Peshawar, Sahiwal, Karachi, and Multan, where he also served in various managerial positions. This hands-on experience further strengthened his belief that industrial development and job creation are among Pakistan's

most urgent needs.

Driven by this vision, he established the SM Foods biscuit factory, and later launched the world-class Volka Foods International facility. These initiatives have not only provided extensive employment opportunities to the youth of Multan and surrounding areas but have also contributed significantly to regional economic stability. His products also generate valuable foreign exchange through exports, strengthening the national economy.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, when industrial activity around the world was severely disrupted and many organizations shut down, SM Foods Group continued its production and demonstrated

strong commitment by not laying off workers and engineers. This approach was widely regarded as an exemplary human and industrial value.

A notable aspect of Chaudhry Zulfiqar Ali Anjum's personality is that he has always considered his employees not merely as a workforce but as part of a family. This spirit of care and sacrifice has distinguished him from many other industrialists. Unfortunately, despite the presence of many wealthy families in the region, there is limited interest in establishing industrial units, whereas such investments could create thousands of employment opportunities and accelerate economic growth.

The meeting also highlighted that Chaudhry Zulfiqar Ali Anjum's investments and capital are fully concentrated in Pakistan. Rather than relocating abroad, he is committed to continuing his journey of development within his homeland. Reports indicate that he contributes approximately 13 billion rupees annually in taxes to the Government of Pakistan, reflecting his strong sense of responsibility toward the national economy.

At the governmental level, he has been appointed as a member of the Board of Investment and the National Export Development Board. He is also

a member of the Board of Governors of Multan Times University. In addition, his support for the Department of Food Science and Technology at Bahauddin Zakariya University is playing an important role in strengthening industry-academia linkages.

His philanthropic and welfare contributions form a long list. He has actively collaborated with the Government of Punjab and local administration in upgrading wards, providing medicines, and improving management systems at Nishtar Hospital and the Cardiology Institute in Multan. His clean drinking water projects also hold a prominent place among his social services.

It is an established fact that individuals like him are the true assets of a nation—those who dedicate their personal success to the development of their city, region, and country. Chaudhry Zulfiqar Ali Anjum is a practical example of this philosophy, proving that with sincerity of purpose, business can become not only a source of profit but also a means of nation-building. I believe that "A person whose hands hold industry, whose heart carries the homeland, and whose thoughts are devoted to the nation's future is the one who shapes the destiny of nations."

The writer is President of Multan Press Club, Multan.

Bull & Bears PSX 100-Share Index Fluctuation

Pakistan: PSX 100-Share Index	
Current	Prev. Close
172,399.90	169,703.60
Day's High	Day's Low
173,093.45	170,946.54
Index Value	Change
30,730,700,680	+2696.30
Percentage	Time
+1.59%	12 Jun, 2026 4:30 pm

Europe: FTSE 100 Index	
Index Value	Change
10,471.72	+167.84
Percentage	Time
+167.84	12 Jun, 4:35 pm GMT+1

USA: Dow Jones Industrial Average	
Index Value	Change
51,261.71	+412.96
Percentage	Time
+0.81%	12 Jun, 1:27 pm GMT-4

Asia Pacific: Nikkei Stocks Average	
Index Value	Change
66,020.04	+1,802.77
Percentage	Time
+2.81%	12 Jun, 3:45 pm GMT+9

Open Market Forex Rates		
Currency	Buying	Selling
Australian Dollar	193.79	198.75
Bahrain Dinar	736.75	747.85
Canadian Dollar	197.57	207.05
China Yuan	38.05	38.80
Danish Krone	43.39	43.79
Euro	322.43	328.45
Hong Kong Dollar	35.01	36.01
Indian Rupee	2.80	3.10
Japanese Yen	1.7114	1.8161
Kuwaiti Dinar	886.85	896.99
Malaysian Ringgit	67.05	67.90
New Zealand \$	160.15	164.88
Norwegians Krone	27.88	28.18
Omani Riyal	722.00	732.32
Qatari Riyal	75.04	76.35
Saudi Riyal	74.20	74.80
Singapore Dollar	214.65	219.64
Swedish Korona	30.27	30.57
Swiss Franc	346.94	351.95
Thai Bhat	8.45	8.65
U.A.E Dirham	75.80	76.80
UK Pound Sterling	373.92	378.90
US Dollar	278.45	279.35

FPCCI President Applauds Budget's Stability Focus, Calls for Growth Acceleration

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD/LAHORE/KARACHI: FPCCI President Atif Ikram Sheikh has acknowledged the Rs. 18.7 trillion Federal Budget 2026-27, commending the government's macroeconomic stabilization efforts while urging a stronger shift toward sustained industrial growth.

Addressing the business community in a post-budget session, Atif Ikram Sheikh congratulated Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and the economic team on presenting their fifth consecutive federal budget, noting it reflects conti-

nuity of economic policy.

He said Pakistan's economy shows encouraging stability. GDP growth has improved to 3.7%, the fiscal deficit narrowed to 0.7% of GDP, and public debt servicing costs dropped 23%. "However, the budget is not merely a statement of revenue and expenditure. It must guide our transition from stabilization to robust economic growth," he added.

FPCCI appreciated several of its recommendations being incorporated, signaling a partial move toward a 'Growth-Driven Model'. Key measures include: abolishment of Capital Value Tax on foreign assets and FED

on international business class travel; Super Tax abolished on incomes up to Rs. 500 million and reduced from 10% to 8% for higher slabs, with full waiver for exporters; elimination of surcharge on salaried class with tax rate cuts; 0.25% final tax on IT exports extended till June 2029; WHT for construction sector filers cut 50%; and a new 1% fixed sales tax for small retailers under Rs. 200 million sales via green QR code.

Despite positives, Atif Ikram Sheikh highlighted concerns. Investment-to-GDP remains stagnant at 14.38%, savings fell to 14.13%, and urban poverty surged from 11% to 17%. He

opposed FBR's Rs. 15.2 trillion tax target, a 17% increase, and Rs. 1.7 trillion petroleum levy target, warning both could fuel inflation.

FPCCI noted absence of key proposals: restoration of FTR for exporters, corporate tax cuts, withdrawal of Section 8B repeal, and broader economic digitalization.

He said it is premature to give a final verdict. FPCCI will review the Finance Bill with stakeholders for 48 hours and issue detailed recommendations. The Federation remains committed to working with the government for a competitive Pakistan.

CM Maryam Nawaz Sharif Congratulates PM on His Fifth Relief-Oriented Federal Budget



Bureau Report

LAHORE: Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif congratulated, and paid tribute to Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and his team for presenting fifth federal budget, describing it as a relief-oriented package

aimed at extending benefits of economic recovery to the common man. She also lauded prime minister and his economic team for introducing what she termed a welfare budget, saying that time has come for the dividends of economic improvement to reach ordinary citizens.

She hoped that the budget would ease burden on salaried class and pave the way for greater public relief through industrial and agricultural growth. She highlighted that the welfare-oriented budget will ensure that every segment of society becomes part of the country's economic progress.

Discussing on Budget

ISLAMABAD: President of the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FPCCI) Atif Ikram Sheikh and FPCCI members talking to media during the Federal Budget 2026-2027 live speech from National Assembly at FPCCI Capital Office, in the Federal Capital.



Photo: Online by Sultan Bashir

Malik Commends PM Sharif's Budget: Incentives to Drive Economic Prosperity



Commerce Desk

LAHORE: Iftikhar Ali Malik, former President of SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry, has praised the federal budget 2026-27 as balanced, growth-oriented, and export-focused. He highlighted its attractive incentives for economic activity and lauded the historic reforms for ease of doing business, believing these measures will steer the national economy towards prosperity and benefit the poor.

Malik anticipates improved economic indicators, including GDP growth and remittances, and

stressed the importance of a sound economy for national survival, expressing hope for Pakistan's progress under prudent economic policies. He specifically commended Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's decisions, which he believes will support the business community and boost economic activity and exports through package cushions. Despite economic challenges from global warming, the Russia-Ukraine war, and regional conflicts, Malik noted the government's bold decisions to address the crisis, including significant allocations for R&D in the agricultural sector, aiming to modernize it with high-tech seeds. He expressed confidence that any remaining issues in the budget will be resolved to the satisfaction of the business community, a vital source of government financial strength.

Pakistan, Indonesia & Romania unite for trilateral trade boom

ISLAMABAD: Advisor and Chief Operating Officer of the Pakistan Romania Business Council, Atif Farooqi called on Acting Ambassador of Indonesia Rahmat Hindiartha to advance groundbreaking trilateral trade between Pakistan, Indonesia, and Romania. This strategic partnership leverages Pakistan's Central Asian crossroads location, Indonesia's ASEAN dominance, and Romania's role as the EU's gateway to the Black Sea and emerging markets.

During the call, Farooqi expressed deep appreciation for Dr. Dan Stoinescu, Ambassador of Romania to Pakistan, for his remarkable contribution in securing the landmark Memorandum of Understanding between Karachi Port Trust and the Port of Constanca.

Farooqi specifically highlighted that Dr. Stoinescu's tireless efforts and diplomatic leadership were instrumental in bridging maritime connectivity between Pakistan and Romania, creating a vital trade artery connecting South Asia to Europe.

The trilateral dialogue focused on boosting trade volume across agriculture, energy, manufacturing, and technology while establishing a long-term coopera-



tion roadmap with measurable milestones for all three nations.

The successful meeting sets the stage for deeper collaboration as Romania

strengthens the EU's bridge to Asia, Pakistan develops as South-Central Asia's trade hub, and Indonesia drives Southeast Asia's economy.

OICCI Praises Budget Restraint but Flags Informal Economy Concerns

Commerce Desk

The Overseas Investors Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OICCI) acknowledges the Federal Budget 2025-26, recognizing its restraint and structural ambitions amidst significant fiscal pressure and IMF commitments.

While commending the milestone Rs13 trillion FBR collection, OICCI highlights that this was largely borne by compliant taxpayers, with the informal economy's unchecked growth to Rs12 trillion representing a policy failure. The chamber welcomes the partial super tax rationalization, easing the burden on mid-sized enterprises, but urges a broader corporate income

tax rate reduction. Positive steps include reduced withholding and advance taxes on exports and real estate, alongside targeted relief for the IT sector. The proposed National Faceless Assessment Centre is a significant structural announcement aimed at reducing taxpayer-officer interaction and harassment. However, OICCI expresses serious concern over the absence of measures to restore sales tax status or introduce zero-rating for oil refineries and marketing companies, which hinders crucial investment. Furthermore, the budget's failure to review the Minimum Tax on Turnover and Alternate Minimum Tax is noted as distorting tax burdens on low-margin sectors.

Unilever Pakistan and WWF-Pakistan Call for Urgent Action on Water Security in Pakistan

Commerce Desk

LAHORE: Water insecurity presents a significant environmental and economic challenge for Pakistan, a nation officially recognized as water-scarce since 2010. Addressing this critical issue, Unilever Pakistan, in collaboration with WWF-Pakistan, has launched a Water Stewardship Programme.

This initiative focuses on practical, measurable interventions within Punjab to enhance long-term water security for both communities and businesses, emphasizing collaborative, catchment-level actions that extend beyond factory

boundaries.

A media roundtable, organized by Unilever Pakistan and WWF-Pakistan, highlighted the escalating water challenges, including declining groundwater levels, increased demand, and climate pressures.

Experts stressed the urgent need for sustainable water management to be a national priority, crucial for safeguarding livelihoods, food security, economic productivity, and environmental resilience.

The event gathered media, sustainability practitioners, and water experts to discuss the state of Pakistan's water resources, the soci-

economic impacts of scarcity, and the vital role of collective action.

Sohail Ali Naqvi from WWF-Pakistan emphasized that meaningful water stewardship transcends factory lines, advocating for science-based interventions to replenish and protect vital water sources for communities, agriculture, and nature.

Ramla Tariq of Unilever Pakistan underscored water as a critical shared resource requiring collective action from all stakeholders, noting the company's investment in groundwater replenishment and improved water management for long-term resilience.



Unilever Pakistan's commitment is part of its broader sustainability agenda, which includes initiatives on plastic circularity, waste reduction, climate action, and respon-

sible resource management, aiming to drive a sustainable and resilient future for Pakistan through partnerships with government, civil society, and the private sector.

Wafi Energy joins emergency responders in multi-agency mega drill to strengthen road safety



Commerce Desk

LAHORE: Wafi Energy Pakistan Limited, in collaboration with, National Highway Motorway Police (NHMP), Rescue 1122, Frontier Works Organization (FWO), ATS and Nestle Pakistan, successfully conducted an Emergency Response Mega Drill at the Lahore-Sialkot Motorway Toll Plaza.

The exercise brought together emergency response teams, transport partners, and government agencies to test preparedness, coordination, and response capabilities in the event of a road transportation emergency. Simulating multiple incident scenarios, the drill covered firefighting, medical emergency response, spill containment, product retrieval, vehicle recovery, and traffic management. Through a coordinated live response, participating organizations evaluated emergency procedures, communication protocols, resource mobilization, and inter-agency collaboration, reinforcing their ability to respond effectively and safely under real-world conditions.

Speaking at the exercise, Muhammad Owais Sultan, Director Manufacturing & Distribution, Wafi Energy Pakistan Limited, said, "At Wafi Energy Pakistan, safety remains our main priority. This Emergency Response Drill reflects our commitment to continuously strengthening our preparedness and response capabilities through collaboration with our partners."

Imran Shahid, Deputy Inspector General (DIG), NHMP, witnessed the exercise and commended the collaborative efforts demonstrated during the drill. He said "Emergency preparedness is most effective when organizations work together with a shared commitment to safety."

Raheel Victor Clinches U-15 Title at 2nd RICHS National Junior Squash Championship

Sports Reporter

KARACHI: Sindh's Raheel Victor and Vishnavi, along with PAF's Anas Rafay, emerged victorious in their respective categories at the 2nd RICHS National Junior Squash Championship, while Anas Shah claimed the title in the PSA Satellite Squash Championship.

The finals of the championship were played at the Jahangir Khan Squash Academy, PSB Karachi Centre, where players from across Pakistan competed

in Boys U-11, Boys U-15, Girls U-15, and Men's Senior events.

A total prize fund of Rs. 600,000 was distributed among the winners and runners-up of the junior championships, while prize money worth US\$1,000 was awarded to the winner, runner-up, and other leading performers of the PSA Satellite event.

The closing ceremony was attended by Pakistan Sports Board (PSB) Karachi Centre Director Ali Raza as the chief guest. He distributed prizes

alongside Sindh Squash Association President Adnan Asad. Also present on the occasion were Sindh Squash Association Secretary Naveed Rehman, KP Squash Association Secretary Mansoor Zaman, Muhammad Naseem, and other officials.

According to Organizing Secretary Naveed Rehman, the championship concluded with exciting finals across all categories.

In the Boys Under-11 final, top seed Anas Rafay (PAF) defeated Sindh's M.



Bin Naseem 3-1 to capture the title. After losing the opening game 8-11, Anas bounced back strongly to win 11-6, 11-8, and 11-7.

The Boys Under-15 final saw Sindh's Raheel Victor dominate second seed Mamoon Khan (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) with a convincing 3-0 victory. Raheel secured the championship with scores of 11-9, 11-0, and 12-10.

In the Girls Under-15 final,

top-seeded Vaishnavi (Sindh) defeated fellow Sindh player Aiman Fatima in straight games, winning 11-7, 11-2, and 11-4 to lift the title.

The PSA Satellite Men's final was won by top seed Anas Shah, who overcame Sindh's Saeed Abdul 3-0 with scores of 11-8, 12-10, and 11-5 to claim the championship crown.

The tournament attracted a strong field of participants from across the country, highlighting the growing

popularity and competitive standard of squash in Pakistan.

Photo Caption: PSB Karachi Centre Director Ali Raza, Sindh Squash Association President Adnan Asad, Secretary Naveed Rehman, Mansoor Zaman, Muhammad Naseem, and other officials pose for a group photograph with the winners of the 2nd RICHS National Junior and PSA Satellite Squash Championship at the closing ceremony.



City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Her Excellency Ms. Ina Lepel, Ambassa-

dor of the Federal Republic of Germany to Pakistan, accompanied by Mr. Jan Krausser, Head of the Press and Cultural

Section, visited the National University of Modern Languages (NUML) and held a meeting with the university leadership to

German Ambassador Visits NUML, Explores Opportunities For Academic And Cultural Collaboration

discuss avenues for academic and cultural cooperation.

The Ambassador was warmly received by Rector NUML, Maj Gen (R) Shahid Mahmood Kiyani, DG Brig Muhammad Rafiq Khan along with senior university officials.

During the meeting, the Rector shared NUML's vision of language education, emphasizing that the university's language programs go beyond linguistic proficiency to promote intercultural understanding, global awareness, and meaningful

international engagement. He highlighted the expansion of language programs across NUML campuses nationwide and underscored the university's commitment to academic excellence through its robust Quality Enhancement Cell, which continuously monitors and enhances educational standards.

Ambassador Lepel expressed keen interest in NUML's academic initiatives and innovative language-teaching methodologies. She appreciated the university's modern learning

environment and particularly commended the newly renovated Language Block, recognizing NUML's efforts to provide state-of-the-art facilities for students.

Following the signing of the Visitors' Book, the Ambassador interacted with faculty members and students of the German Language Department. During the engaging session, she responded to students' questions and offered valuable insights on academic preparation, cultural adaptability, and opportunities for higher educa-

tion in Germany.

The visit reaffirmed the strong academic and cultural ties between Pakistan and Germany and provided a valuable platform for dialogue and cooperation in the field of language education.

It is anticipated that the visit will open new avenues for collaboration between NUML, German universities, and the German Embassy in Pakistan, fostering greater academic exchange, cultural engagement, and institutional partnerships in the years to come.

Emirates Soars to Top: Named 'Best Overall Airline in the Middle East'

News Desk

ISLAMABAD: Emirates has been awarded 'Best Overall Airline in the Middle East' at the 2026 APEX Best in Airline Awards in Dubai, recognizing its exceptional customer experience. The airline received high scores based on verified passenger feedback across five key areas: seat comfort, cabin service, food and beverage, entertainment, and connectivity. Emir-

ates excels in seat comfort with thoughtfully designed cabins and ergonomic seating across its fleet. Ongoing cabin enhancements include new Safian Z400 seats for Economy Class, featuring adjustable headrests. The Premium Economy cabin offers spacious seats with full leg and footrests. Business Class seats, inspired by the S Lounge design, provide enhanced privacy and convert to lie-flat beds. First Class suites are described as

luxurious private rooms in the sky, offering lie-flat beds and a 'zero gravity' position. Exceptional cabin service is a hallmark, with crew representing diverse nationalities and speaking numerous languages, trained to world-class hospitality standards. The service is attentive, innovative, and passionate, with carefully choreographed service flows ensuring a personalized experience. The food and beverage offering is a memo-

orable aspect, combining global culinary influences with destination-inspired flavors. Multi-course meals, special dietary options, and seasonal treats are available across all classes. Premium Economy offers elevated dining on Royal Doulton china. Business Class features gourmet menus inspired by regional cuisines and premium beverages, including Moët & Chandon. First Class provides a dine-on-demand service with à

la carte meals, premium ingredients, unlimited caviar, and Dom Pérignon champagne. Emirates' award-winning 'ice' entertainment system offers over 6,500 channels of content, including films, music, podcasts, and live sports, through partnerships with leading platforms. Connectivity is enhanced through a partnership with Starlink, providing ultra-fast, low-latency internet across the fleet. This complimentary service allows



passengers to stream, work, and stay connected seamlessly, with many aircraft already equipped and the rollout accelerating. The APEX Best in Airline Awards use

anonymous passenger feedback gathered through TripIt® from Concur®, analysing over one million flights rated by passengers globally.

Budget 2026-27 Unveiled

Continued from Page 1

Development and infrastructure

The federal PSDP has been allocated Rs1 trillion, with priority given to water infrastructure, transport, energy transmission, digital transformation, and climate resilience.

The largest share within the development budget — Rs365 billion — goes to infrastructure.

This includes Rs100 billion for the N-25 expressway linking Karachi to Chaman, Rs25 billion for the Karachi-Rohri rail section, and Rs93 billion

for Gwadar port and inter-provincial transport links.

Rs116.2 billion has been earmarked for the power sector, with electricity supply to Special Economic Zones listed as a priority.

Rs103.1 billion has been allocated for 43 hydro projects, including Rs14 billion for Diamer Bhasha Dam and Rs10 billion for Karachi's K-IV water project. Aurangzeb noted that last year's floods caused Rs822 billion in economic losses.

Rs54.6 billion has been set aside for housing, with 150,000

low-cost residential units to be built at federal and provincial levels.

Rs71 billion has been allocated for the Prime Minister's Apna Ghar scheme.

Social spending

The BISP allocation has been raised to Rs838 billion, up 17% from last year, with coverage to be extended to 12 million families. Rs25.1 billion has been allocated for health, Rs46 billion for higher education — up from Rs34.9 billion last year — and Rs3.6 billion separately for science and technology.

AJK will receive Rs146 billion, Gilgit-Baltistan Rs88 billion, and KP's merged districts Rs95 billion from current expenditure allocations.

Tax relief measures

The finance minister announced income tax relief across four salary slabs for salaried individuals.

The tax rate on annual salaries between Rs2.2 million and Rs3.2 million has been proposed at 20%, while the rate on Rs3.2 million to Rs4.1 million has been cut to 25% from 30%.

Salaries between Rs4.1 million

and Rs5.6 million will attract 29% tax, down from 35%, and those between Rs5.6 million and Rs7 million will be taxed at 32%, also down from 35%. The surcharge on salaried persons has been abolished entirely.

Super tax on income between Rs150 million and Rs500 million has been fully eliminated, while the rate on income exceeding Rs500 million has been cut from 10% to 8%.

Withholding tax on property purchase for filers has been halved to 1.25%, and on property sales to 2.75%. The tax

on use of credit or debit cards abroad has been slashed from 5% to 0.5%.

Capital value tax on foreign assets has been removed, and taxes on sanitary pads and women's health products have been abolished.

For IT exports, a 0.25% exemption has been extended until 2029. Advance income tax on exports has been reduced from 2% to 1.25%.

A fixed tax scheme has been introduced for small shopkeepers, with 1% annual tax on sales up to Rs200 million.

FBR officials will not be permitted to enter shops for routine questioning, and no routine audits will be conducted.

Compliant shopkeepers will be issued a green signboard. Penalties imposed over the past seven years will be adjusted for inflation.

Aurangzeb said the government aims to boost tax revenue through compliance and enforcement rather than new taxes, with production monitoring systems expected to generate an additional Rs61 billion.

Trump's Peace and Steal Deal Paradox

Continued from Page 4

directly at gas stations and grocery stores.

For millions of Americans already struggling with the rising cost of living, the burden was particularly painful. Every increase in oil prices affected household budgets. Inflation reduced purchasing power. Businesses delayed investment decisions. Financial markets reflected growing anxiety over the possibility of a prolonged military confrontation.

Regardless of interpretation, Trump's statements transformed what might have been a straightforward peace announcement into a much broader discussion about power, resources, and international legitimacy.

Yet perhaps the most overlooked aspect of the story is the role of diplomacy behind the scenes. During his remarks, President Trump specifically acknowledged the efforts of Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir. According to Trump, both leaders played an active role in facilitating communication between the parties and encouraging a diplomatic path forward.

Yet diplomacy and agreement are not the same thing. An agreement exists only when all principal parties publicly acknowledge and formally approve it. At present, that threshold has not yet been crossed. Trump's confidence, Iran's caution, and Israel's apparent surprise

illustrate that the final chapter of this diplomatic drama has not yet been written.

For now, the peace deal announced by Washington remains a promise rather than a confirmed reality. Whether it ultimately succeeds will depend not on declarations made before cameras, but on decisions made behind closed doors in Washington, Tehran, Jerusalem, and the diplomatic capitals of Europe. The destination may be peace, but the journey is clearly not over.

The writer is Press Secretary to the President (Rtd), Former Press Minister, Embassy of Pakistan to France, Former Press Attaché to Malaysia and Former MD, SRBC. He is living in Michigan, USA

Maritime Delimitation in East Asia and Its Implications for Indian Ocean Geopolitics

Continued from Page 4

it at the centre of Indian Ocean maritime affairs. Nearly 95 percent of India's trade by volume and approximately 70 percent by value moves through maritime routes. Any instability in Hormuz or Bab-el-Mandab directly affects India's energy security and economic interests.

The broader lesson emerging from the Philippines-Japan delimitation initiative is that maritime disputes need not inevitably lead to conflict. Historical examples such as the Indonesia-Philippines EEZ Agreement

demonstrate that even complex maritime disagreements can be resolved through sustained diplomacy and legal negotiation. Such agreements reduce uncertainty, facilitate resource management, and strengthen regional stability.

As geopolitical competition intensifies across the Indo-Pacific, maritime boundary agreements will become increasingly important instruments of strategic stability. Whether in the South China Sea, the East China Sea, the Strait of Hormuz, or the Bab-el-Mandab, the central challenge remains the same: balancing

national interests with the collective need for secure and open sea lanes.

In an era where maritime commerce forms the backbone of globalization, the significance of legal maritime delimitation extends far beyond national boundaries. The ongoing negotiations in East Asia may therefore serve as an important precedent for managing maritime competition elsewhere, including some of the world's most strategically sensitive waterways in the Indian Ocean region.

The writer is associated with Maritime Centre of Excellence

Govt employees are protesting

ISLAMABAD: Government employees shouting slogans during protest in favor of their demands Pak Secretariat Chowk ahead of Budget 2026-27 session at the Parliament House in the Federal Capital.



Photo: Online

Interior Ministry denies meeting between Mohsin Naqvi and KP CM Afridi

News Desk

PESHAWAR: The Ministry of Interior has officially refuted circulating media and social media reports alleging a meeting between Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Sohail Afridi, deeming the claims entirely baseless and fabricated.

A ministry spokesperson reiterated that no such meeting took place, with all such reports being factually incorrect.

In a separate event, Minister

Naqvi visited the Combined Military Hospital (CMH) in Peshawar to meet with injured Pakistan Army and Federal Constabulary soldiers. He individually spoke with each wounded personnel, inquiring about their well-being and recovery, and received updates from medical staff on their treatment.

Praising their courage and sacrifices in service to the nation, Naqvi conveyed his sincere wishes for their swift recovery and underscored the government's commitment to providing them with optimal



medical care and rehabilitation.

He lauded their bravery in confronting militant groups, stating their actions were

instrumental in thwarting terrorist activities and securing the nation.

Naqvi declared them national heroes, empha-

sizing that the country's security relies on the dedication of its armed forces and law enforcement, and that their valor ensures national stability against any hostile threat. This visit underscored the government's solidarity with security forces in counterterrorism efforts and acknowledged the crucial sacrifices made for national peace and stability.

Also present on the occasion were Shahab Ali Shah, Chief Secretary of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Nazeer Ahmed Gada, Inspector General of the Federal Constabulary.

Budget to put Pakistan on path of growth, provides relief to salaried class: Minister

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Board of Investment Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh on Friday welcomed the federal budget, describing it as a comprehensive and people-friendly financial plan presented under difficult economic circumstances.

Congratulating the government on the budget, the minister said special attention had been given to the salaried class, with efforts made to minimize the tax burden on fixed-income earners.

Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh said the government had also announced a 7 percent increase



in the salaries of public sector employees, demonstrating its commitment to support workers amid rising living costs.

He termed the budget a balanced package that would help accelerate economic growth and development, adding that the government's measures were aimed at protecting the interests of ordinary citizens while strengthening the national economy.

The minister expressed confidence that the budget would play an important role in steering Pakistan towards sustainable economic progress and prosperity.

Govt employees plan protest outside Parliament

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Government employees in Islamabad plan to protest in front of Parliament House during the 2026-27 federal budget presentation, demanding their concerns be addressed. They have already been protesting at the Ministry of Finance. Their demands include merging ad hoc relief allowances into basic pay, introducing pay scale 2026 with 100% ad hoc relief, increasing salaries for those earning under Rs50,000 by 50%, and raising conveyance, medical, and house rent allowances by 200%. They also call for the withdrawal of pension reforms, an additional 30% disparity reduction allowance, abolition of the 25% tax slab for teachers and researchers, regularization of daily wage and contract employees, restoration of child recruitment for deceased employees' children, and formation of joint committees for privatized institutions. They are firm on a minimum monthly salary of Rs50,000.

Minister praises budget for supporting salaried class, agriculture and Business Sector

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for National Food Security and Research, Malik Rasheed Ahmed Khan, on Friday termed the federal budget a balanced and people-friendly document, saying it was prepared under extremely challenging economic circumstances while avoiding the imposition of new taxes on the general public.

Speaking to media, he said that under the leadership of the Prime Minister, the Finance Minister had presented a budget that did not introduce any new taxes on ordinary citizens.

He noted that additional taxation



had mainly been imposed on luxury vehicles, while key sectors of the economy had been provided relief

measures.

He highlighted that the salaried class had been given a seven percent increase in salaries, which would help ease financial pressures on government employees. He also pointed out that measures had been taken to support the agriculture sector, which remains a vital contributor to the national economy.

He further said that the government had reduced property-related taxes to facilitate the business community and encourage investment. These measures, he added, would help promote economic activity and create a more favorable environment for businesses to grow.

Locals Foil Suicide Attack on Mosque in Lakki Marwat

Correspondent

LAKKI MARWAT: According to local sources, a Khawarij operative attempted to target a local mosque during Friday prayers today, June 12, in a suicide bombing attempt.

The terrorist tried desperately to reach the mosque, but timely and courageous action by local citizens neutralized and killed the attacker before he could enter the premises.

However, explosives strapped to his motorcycle detonated, martyring a five-year-old girl and injuring five others, including children.

The injured are being evacuated to the hospital.

Meanwhile, security forces have cordoned off the area and launched a search operation.



Following the incident, public anger and outrage against the Khawarij gripped residents of Lakki Marwat.

Former senator Taj Afridi dies in accident on Islamabad-Peshawar motorway

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) former senator Taj Muhammad Afridi lost his life in a road accident on the Kernal Sher Khan Interchange on M-1 Motorway on Friday. The incident took place when the senator was travelling to Peshawar from the federal capital. His driver sustained injuries in the accident, and he has been shifted to a hospital for treatment.

Reports said the incident occurred due to a mechanical fault in the vehicle.

Soon after receiving the report,



Motorway Police rushed to the spot and shifted the deceased and the injured driver to the hospital.

Several security personnel injured in firing, violence by banned JAAC miscreants



Bureau Report

MUZAFFARABAD: Despite its continuous claims of maintaining peace, the disruptive committee in Azad Kashmir remains actively involved in violent activities.

Miscreants belonging to the banned Joint Action Committee opened fire and subjected on-duty security personnel to brutal violence in Rawalakot, leaving several of them seriously injured. The security personnel were performing their duties in the area

to maintain law and order and to protect the lives and property of the public.

Members of this disruptive committee have previously targeted state property, in addition to martyring and injuring several security personnel.

According to experts, the violent actions perpetrated by the so-called Action Committee demonstrate that rather than struggling for public rights, this group remains strictly committed to a provocative and incendiary agenda.

FCC to hear Aafia Siddiqui case on June 16

Court Reporter

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Constitutional Court (FCC) has fixed the Dr Aafia Siddiqui case for hearing, along with an appeal related to contempt of court proceedings against the prime minister and the federal cabinet.

A two-member bench headed by Chief Justice Aminuddin Khan will hear the case on June 16. The court has also scheduled the appeal filed against the proceedings initiated over alleged contempt involving the prime minister and cabinet members.

The federal government has challenged the decision related to action against the Prime Minister and the cabinet.

The case stems from earlier proceedings in which the Islamabad



High Court had ordered contempt of court action over non-compliance in the Dr Aafia Siddiqui case.