



Daily The Spokesman

A Leading National Daily



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President Asif Zardari approves four key bills passed by Parliament

President Asif Ali Zardari has formally approved four important bills passed by Parliament, according to the President House. The President House said the amendments aim to improve the performance of relevant sectors and align legal frameworks with current requirements.



Faisal Vawda strongly criticises federal gov't's policies

Senator Faisal Vawda once again criticizes federal government's policies while talking in Dunya News programme. When asked about what he believes is Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's best quality, Faisal Vawda responded by saying that he did not know the answer to that question.

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Budget Approval

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz signs the budget document.



Photo: DGPR

Punjab unveils Rs5.9tr budget with no new taxes, raises salaries and pensions

Bureau Report

LAHORE: Punjab on Tuesday presented a budget worth more than Rs5.9 trillion for the fiscal year 2026-27, with no new taxes and a focus on development, social welfare and public relief measures.

Provincial Finance Minister Mujtaba Shuja-ur-Rehman tabled the budget in the Punjab Assembly in the presence of Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz. The session began one hour and 41 minutes behind schedule.

Presenting the budget, the

finance minister announced a 7 per cent increase in salaries for government employees and a 3.5% rise in pensions. Budget documents showed total provincial expenditures estimated at Rs3.579 trillion.

The government allocated Rs650 billion for salaries and Rs505.8 billion for pensions.

Social protection programmes were allocated Rs25 billion, while the Suthra Punjab Programme received Rs150 billion.

Operational expenditures were estimated at Rs620

billion, while Rs570 billion was earmarked for other development and capital expenditures.

The provincial government also proposed Rs900 billion for the Punjab Finance Commission to support local governments and district administrations.

Education emerged as the largest priority sector, with more than Rs900 billion allocated, while the health sector was earmarked Rs680 billion.

The budget also included funding for student-focused initiatives, including the laptop scheme, electric scooters, bicycle

scheme and the Honhaar Scholarship Programme, with more than Rs20 billion set aside for these projects.

Among other welfare measures, the government proposed Rs18 billion for university grants, Rs7 billion for the Parwaaz Card programme and Rs35 billion for the Ramazan relief package.

The budget proposed Rs115 billion for local government and community development, more than Rs78 billion for transport, and Rs71 billion for housing and urban development.

Agriculture was allocated

Rs60 billion, while irrigation received Rs30 billion. The government also proposed Rs15 billion for aquaculture and fisheries and Rs6.75 billion for livestock and dairy development.

For law and order and governance, Rs12.88 billion was allocated for police, Rs3 billion for the judiciary and Rs2.2 billion for law and parliamentary affairs.

The finance minister said the budget would serve as a key milestone in achieving the government's goals of public relief, development and social protection.

PM directs fast-track completion of 100 MW GB solarization project

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: The solarization of government buildings in Gilgit-Baltistan under the federal government's 100-megawatt solar energy initiative will be completed by December 2026, while the Baltistan Division component is scheduled for completion by October 2026, Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif was informed during a review meeting on Tuesday.

Chairing a meeting to review



progress on the solar energy project in Gilgit-Baltistan,

the prime minister directed the authorities concerned to

expedite work and ensure the project's completion at the earliest.

During the meeting, the prime minister said that the federal government would fully finance the 100MW solar power project aimed at providing affordable and sustainable energy to the people of Gilgit-Baltistan.

According to the briefing, an 18MW solarization project for government buildings was being implemented across the region. The projects covering govern-

ment buildings in Gilgit and Diamer divisions are expected to be completed by December 2026, while solarization work in the Baltistan Division will conclude by October 2026.

The meeting was attended by Minister for Planning and Development Ahsan Iqbal, Minister for Economic Affairs Ahad Khan Cheema, Minister for Power Sardar Awais Ahmad Khan Leghari, Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan Engineer Amir Muqam, and senior government officials.

Naqvi, Jamaat-e-Islami chief discuss regional peace after US-Iran understanding

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi visited Jamaat-e-Islami's headquarters, Mansoorah, on Tuesday, and discussed with Jamaat-e-Islami chief Hafiz Naeem-ur-Rehman the country's political, economic and security situation, as well as recent developments following the Iran-US reconciliation.

The meeting featured a detailed exchange of views on Pakistan's overall political and economic landscape, law and order challenges, and efforts aimed at providing relief to the public.

Both leaders also reviewed the changing regional dynamics after the recent understanding reached between Iran and the United States.

During the discussion, both

leaders welcomed the Iran-US reconciliation, describing it as a positive development for regional peace and stability.

Hafiz Naeem-ur-Rehman commended Pakistan's sincere diplomatic role in facilitating the rapprochement and said the country's historic contribution to the process would be remembered for years to come.

Interior Minister Mohsin

Naqvi briefed the Jamaat-e-Islami chief on the Iran-US negotiations and the government's diplomatic efforts that contributed to the process.

He credited Pakistan's leadership for helping bring the two sides closer, saying the country deserved recognition for easing tensions in the region.

"Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Field Marshal Asim

Munir played an unforgettable role in advancing peace," Naqvi said.

"The credit for helping reduce regional tensions goes to Pakistan. We bow in gratitude to Almighty Allah for accepting our humble efforts."

The meeting also addressed humanitarian concerns involving Pakistani citizens stranded in Somalia.

Trump says Iran deal to be public soon and will rule out nuclear weapon for Tehran

Deal to be formally signed in Switzerland on Friday

Reuters

EVIAN-LES-BAINS, FRANCE: Doubts swirled around the US-Iran interim deal to end the war in the Middle East with warnings that shipping and energy exports could take weeks to recover, although US President Donald Trump said on Tuesday the text would be made public soon.

The interim deal would extend a tenuous ceasefire announced in April by another 60 days and reopen the Strait of Hormuz, which Iran has effectively blocked since the US and Israel attacked Iran in February.

Trump said the text of the deal states clearly that Tehran will not have a nuclear weapon, and the full agreement would be made public in a formal setting in a few days.

Speaking at the G7 meetings in France, Trump



added that he liked the idea of sending the Iran deal to Congress for review, a request by some Republican lawmakers.

Negotiators would address difficult issues like the future of Iran's nuclear programme during the next phase of talks, which Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi said would start in Switzerland on Friday after the formal signing of the framework deal.

Continue on Page 7

Govt pursuing efforts for release of 10 Pakistani hostages in Somalia: Tarar

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Law and Justice Azam Nazeer Tarar on Tuesday informed the National Assembly that the government is actively working through diplomatic channels to secure the release of 10 Pakistani citizens being held hostage in Somalia.

Responding to a point raised by PPP lawmaker Abdul Qadir Patel during the House proceedings, the minister said the government took immediate notice of the matter as soon as it was brought before Parliament.

The minister informed House that Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar had already contacted his Somali counterpart to discuss the issue, adding that the Foreign Office has remained fully engaged and has issued statements regarding the situation.

Azam Tarar said that Foreign Secretary Anna Baloch is in continuous contact with the relevant Somali authorities, while Pakistan's mission in Djibouti is closely monitoring developments and coordinating efforts for the hostages' release.

From Default Brink to Growth: Pakistan's Economic Turnaround Underway, Says Asif

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Defence Khawaja Muhammad Asif reiterated the government's commitment to resolving Balochistan's protracted issues through collective efforts involving political stakeholders and state institutions. He acknowledged that decades-old challenges require time for resolution and stressed a unified national approach for peace, security, and socio-economic upliftment. Asif linked terrorism in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan to elements operating from Afghan territory, detailing Pakistan's diplomatic engagements with Afghan authorities, including his personal visits to Kabul with the ISI chief, to secure assurances against using Afghan soil for anti-Pakistan activities.

He noted similar discussions in Turkey and Qatar without achieving desired outcomes, emphasizing the need for credible guarantees. Asif highlighted the sacrifices of approximately 4,000 security personnel martyred since 2022 and attributed current instability to the legacy of weapons and militancy from the 1980s. He commended Pakistan's resilience against external challenges, citing the nation's response to a larger enemy attack in May 2025 as a moment of pride. Asif credited Prime Minister Sharif, Field Marshal Munir, and national leadership for enhancing Pakistan's international standing. Regarding Azad Jammu and Kashmir, he supported decisions on refugee seats being made by elected representatives and opposed foreign influence on local politics.

Azad Kashmir PM Highlights Faith, Unity Amidst Tensions



Bureau Report

MUZAFFARABAD: Azad Kashmir Prime Minister Faisal Mumtaz Rathore emphasized that the bond between Pakistan and Kashmir is rooted in faith ("La ilaha illallah"), lamenting current strains. He praised Pakistan's role in brokering the "Islamabad Agreement" to end the US-Iran war, an achievement that garnered global attention.

Rathore acknowledged shared responsibility for Azad Kashmir's current "sad situation," particularly the loss of Pakistani soldiers and police. He stressed the primacy of human life and the need to extinguish divisive fires, stating that true success lies in strengthening the state, not in its surrender.

He refuted claims that essential facilities like flour and electricity would be withdrawn if a movement fails,

assuring they would be maintained. Rathore detailed efforts during his seven-month tenure to address public issues, including implementing agreements with the banned Joint Public Action Committee, resolving media concerns, bolstering Kashmir Bank, and fulfilling most budgetary and constitutional demands.

He noted that despite 37 demands being met, an impression of non-compliance was created. Rathore also

addressed the refugee seat issue, clarifying a committee was formed for dialogue rather than abolition.

He recounted inviting the action committee to an All Parties Conference, though they declined.

He advocated for reforms and the regularization of ad hoc employees. Finally, he expressed deep concern over the inability of candidates to campaign for the upcoming July 27 elections due to the prevailing environment.

Prime Minister Rathore fulfills long-standing demand, securing jobs for ad hoc workers



Bureau Report.

MUZAFFARABAD: Employees thanked Prime Minister of Azad Kashmir Faisal Mumtaz Rathore for passing the act for the permanent status of ad hoc and temporary employees from the Azad Kashmir Legislative Assembly. After the adjournment of assembly session Prime Minister Faisal Rathore came out a hundreds of temporary and ad hoc employees gave him a grand welcome, garlanded him, and showered him with flower petals. The assembly secretariat echoed with slogans in favor of Faisal Mumtaz Rathore. Senior government ministers Mian Abdul Waheed, Javed Ayub, Chaudhry Qasim Majeed, Javed Badhanvi, spokesperson Shaukat Javed Mir and others were present on the occasion. Speaking on the occasion, officials of various employee organizations including the Secretariat Employees Association thanked the Prime Minister for the permanent status of temporary employees. They said that Prime Minister Faisal Rathore fulfilled the long-standing demand of ad hoc employees. The People's Party has never snatched people's jobs, it has always been a source of employment for people. The memories of the late Mumtaz Hussain Rathore's public life and employee-friendly policy are still alive even after 36 years.

Azad Jammu and Kashmir Assembly passes historic service laws

City Desk

MUZAFFARABAD: In the session of the Azad Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly presided over by Speaker Chaudhry Latif Akbar, the draft laws "The Azad Jammu and Kashmir Regularisation of services of the Ad-hoc or Temporary Employees (Basic Pay Scale-1) Ordinance, 2026" and "The Azad Jammu and Kashmir Regularisation of services of the Ad-hoc or Temporary Employees Act, 2026" were presented in the House by the Minister for Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Mian Abdul Waheed Advocate, which were unanimously approved by the House.

Tariq Sultan Bajwa Reviews WASA Toba Tek Singh's Monsoon Preparedness

Zafar Chishti

TOBA TEK SINGH: Parliamentary Secretary Tariq Sultan Bajwa visited WASA Toba Tek Singh to assess monsoon preparedness, performance, and civic services.



He inspected various sections and received a briefing on monsoon arrangements, drainage, emergency response, and complaint handling. Bajwa praised WASA's progress, emphasizing quality service delivery and the need for full resource utilization and staff alertness during the monsoon. He directed authorities to ensure operational drainage, machinery, disposal stations, and complaint systems. He noted public appreciation for WASA's efforts and expressed confidence in its continued progress and dedication under Managing Director Kamran Kahlon.

Hyderabad Police Junior Clerk Seeks Justice in Sindh High Court

Abdul Ghafoor Sarhio

HYDERABAD: Hyderabad Police junior clerk Maria Sario has petitioned the Sindh High Court against her suspension, criminal cases, eviction, and sexual harassment claims.



The court issued notices to several officials, including the Home Secretary, IG Sindh, and SSP Hyderabad Shahzeb Chachar. Sario's lawyers argue the departmental actions are illegal and malicious. She seeks to quash an FIR, declare her suspension and transfer orders void, and be reinstated in Hyderabad with full benefits. The petition also calls for SSP Chachar's transfer and an independent inquiry into allegations of sexual harassment, misuse of authority, and mistreatment of the transgender community.

It requests evidence preservation and action against officials. The court, after hearing arguments, has sought replies by July 14. Sario told the media that SSP Chachar allegedly wants her phone decoded, which she claims contains critical evidence, and she is willing to submit it for forensic examination.

Jore Mela celebration

LAHORE: Sikh pilgrims taking meal during Jore Mela celebrations at Gurdwara Dera Sahib in the Provincial Capital.



Photo: Online

Iran-US Understanding: A Diplomatic Turning Point

Bureau Report

MUZAFFARABAD: Pakistan's former Ambassador to the US, China, and the UN, Sardar Masood Khan, believes the emerging Iran-US understanding marks a crucial diplomatic shift from confrontation to engagement.

He views it as a roadmap for future negotiations, aiming to de-escalate hostilities, reopen the Strait of Hormuz, alleviate economic uncertainty, and restart structured talks on Iran's nuclear program.

Khan highlighted the benefits for both nations, including reduced tensions and regional stability crucial for global energy and trade.

He noted that while both sides may claim strategic success domestically, the



real achievement is preventing escalation and opening a path to peaceful dispute resolution, facilitated by persistent behind-the-scenes diplomacy.

Khan also addressed regional reactions, particularly Israel's concerns stemming from its political landscape and potential challenges to Iran's

system and nuclear talks.

He suggested recent military actions in Beirut might aim to disrupt the diplomatic process, but praised Iran and the US for restraining from further escalation.

The success of the understanding hinges on adherence to its spirit and avoiding derailment, with challenges like regional security, missile capabilities, and geopolitical rivalries persisting.

He linked Israel's posture to its internal political pressures and messaging. Finally, Khan underscored Pakistan's valuable role as a facilitator, enhancing its international standing and reinforcing its position as a credible peacemaker committed to regional stability and diplomatic engagement.



Asim Tanveer

KARACHI: In Karachi, the Ministry of Human Rights and UN Women, in collaboration with Sindh provincial departments, organized a high-level consultative session to address femicide

and so-called honor killings. This initiative reflects the government's zero-tolerance policy towards violence against women and the recent increase in such cases.

The session gathered diverse stakeholders, including government repre-

sentatives, justice sector officials, human rights bodies, civil society, UN agencies, and women's rights advocates, to identify priority actions for preventing gender-related killings, enhancing accountability, and improving protection and access to justice for victims.

Joint Communiqué "No Honour in Killing" Adopted to Combat Gender-Based Violence

Officials from the Sindh government, including the Special Assistant to the Chief Minister on Human Rights and the Chairperson of the Sindh Commission on the Status of Women, reiterated their commitment to protecting women and girls' rights through progressive legislation and institutional reforms.

They stressed that while laws are crucial, their effective implementation, holding perpetrators accountable, and fostering a societal culture that denounces violence against women are equally vital.

The Secretary of the Ministry of Human Rights pledged support for

national and provincial efforts to prevent gender-related killings and strengthen accountability.

UN Women's Deputy Country Representative emphasized that femicides are preventable and require a multi-faceted approach beyond criminal justice, including social norm change and robust institutional support informed by evidence.

The consultation highlighted alarming statistics, with 554 honor killing cases processed between January 2024 and April 2026, underscoring significant gaps in prevention, reporting, and accountability. The

session concluded with the adoption of the "No Honour in Killing" Joint Communiqué.

This pledged commitment from all stakeholders to strengthen accountability mechanisms, improve support services, enhance data collection, reject discriminatory justice practices, and invest in community-based prevention and social norm transformation.

Participants collectively resolved to prevent, prosecute, and unequivocally condemn gender-related killings of women and girls in Pakistan, ensuring their right to live free from violence and discrimination.



SERVICES

Namaz Timings

Fajr 3:13 am
Zohr 12:08 pm
Asr 5:09 pm
Maghrib 7:20 pm
Isha 9:04 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

Honorary Consul General of Iceland Extends Greetings on Iceland's National Day

News Desk

ISLAMABAD: On the occasion of the National Day of Iceland, Mr. Saad Mahmood, Honorary Consul General of Iceland, extended heartfelt congratulations and warm wishes to the people of Iceland as they celebrate this important national occasion.

In his message, Mr. Saad Mahmood highlighted the significance of 17th June as a symbol of Iceland's independence, national pride, and remarkable journey of progress. He acknowledged Iceland's global recognition as a nation known for innovation, sustainability, resilience, and social harmony. Mr. Mahmood stated that Iceland continues to inspire the international community through its commitment to development, environmental stewardship, and inclusive growth.

He also emphasized the growing friendship and cooperation between Iceland and Pakistan, expressing hope that bilateral ties will continue to strengthen through mutual respect, collaboration, and shared aspirations for peace and prosperity.

"On this joyous occasion, I extend my sincere best wishes to the people of Iceland. May Iceland continue to prosper and achieve greater success in the years ahead," said Mr. Mahmood.

The National Day of Iceland commemorates the country's independence and remains a proud reflection of the Icelandic people's strength, unity, and enduring spirit.

Fostering innovation, creative thinking and a vibrant startup culture is the need of the hour, Says Quratulain Babar

Bureau Report

LAHORE: The University of Management and Technology (UMT), through its Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation (CENTIN) organized 1st Entrepreneurship Day, bringing together students, faculty members, business experts, industry professionals and emerging startups. The event aimed to promote innovation, entrepreneurial leadership and new avenues for economic growth while fostering an entrepreneurial mindset among young people.

Director General of the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP), Rafia Syed, attended the event as the Chief Guest. Provost UMT, Dr. Tashfeen Azhar, Director of the Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation, Quratulain Babar, along with Deputy Manager Farooq Anwar, Senior Officer Tooba Irfan, and Coordinator Mariyam Saif,

also participated in the event.

Speaking on the occasion, Quratulain Babar said that UMT believes in preparing young people not merely as job seekers but as leaders capable of creating employment opportunities for others.

She emphasized that fostering innovation, creative thinking and a vibrant startup culture is the need of the hour. She further said that the Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation is actively working to nurture entrepreneurial thinking, leadership and innovative capabilities among the youth.

Addressing the participants, Chief Guest Rafia Syed stressed that providing young people with access to export opportunities, entrepreneurial ventures and global markets is essential for economic progress. She highlighted the importance of exposing youth to the realities, challenges and success stories of the business world.



She also appreciated UMT's efforts in promoting research, innovation and strengthening academia-industry link-

ages. The event concluded with Provost UMT, Dr. Tashfeen Azhar presenting

commemorative souvenirs to the distinguished guests in recognition of their participation and contributions.

Free medical camp

The free medical camp organized by Hamdard Foundation Pakistan is inaugurated by Assistant Commissioner Firozabad, Ms. Javeria Ashraf, through a ribbon-cutting ceremony. Ms. Sadia Rashid, President of Hamdard Foundation Pakistan, and Mr. Ghulam Muhammad, Director of the Sports Division, Commissioner Karachi Office, are also present on this occasion.



BISP and Sindh Health Launch New Nutrition and Immunization Centers in Karachi

News Desk

KARACHI: Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) Chairperson Senator Rubina Khalid, alongside Sindh Health Minister Dr. Azra Fazal Pechuho, inaugurated a Nutrition Stabilization Center and Model Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI) Center at NICH, Karachi. The Nutrition Stabilization Center will treat children with moderate to severe acute malnutrition, linking them through a referral mechanism from Nashonuma Facilitation Centers. This initiative highlights a collaborative effort against child malnutrition. Dr. Pechuho emphasized the urgency of addressing malnutrition's impact on cognitive development and praised the Benazir Nashonuma Programme's success, noting over 90% immunization coverage among beneficiaries and establishing the Model EPI Center as a provincial benchmark for preventive health services.

Quran: The Ultimate Guide for Muslim Success, Says Scholar

Allama Syed Riaz Hussain Shah stated that the Quran is a complete code of life and the success of Muslims depends on adhering to the Quran, Sunnah, and Nizam-e-Mustafa. At a Zikr and Dars-e-Quran gathering, he also honored the sacrifices of Ahl-e-Bait (RA) as an enduring symbol of truth. He stressed that Islam's message will always triumph and encouraged Muslims to comprehend and implement Quranic and Sunnah teachings. The event concluded with prayers for Muslim unity, Pakistan's stability, and global Muslim welfare.



SDPI and University of Sindh Forge Partnership for Sustainable Development Research



The Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) and the University of Sindh have formalized their collaboration through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) aimed at advancing policy research, capacity building, and evidence-based policymaking.

This partnership will focus on critical areas including climate adaptation, social protection, economic empowerment, and sustainable development, with a particular emphasis on the highly vulnerable region of Thatta.

The MoU was signed by Dr. Fareeha Armughan from SDPI and Prof. Dr. Misbah Bibi Qureshi from the University of Sindh, and it will facilitate joint research projects, policy studies, field interventions, faculty and student exchanges, training programs, and advocacy activities.

This collaboration builds on a successful prior initiative, the Digital Financial Literacy Training (DFLT) program, supported by the European Union and the German government, which aims to empower women agricultural workers in remote Sindh.

Both institutions expressed optimism about the long-term potential of this partnership. Dr. Armughan highlighted the strategic importance of Sindh, especially Thatta, for development interventions and announced an upcoming fieldwork phase involving University of Sindh students. Prof. Dr. Qureshi emphasized the role of universities as catalysts for social transformation and the value of think tank partnerships in translating academic knowledge into practical development outcomes.

Dr. Shafiqat Munir Ahmad of SDPI underscored the agreement as a significant opportunity for deepening research and policy engagement, particularly in addressing provincial development priorities, and noted the University of Sindh's strong research base and strategic location. The MoU outlines a framework for joint efforts in policy dialogue, knowledge sharing, and community engagement, promoting a stronger link between knowledge generation and effective interventions for community benefit.

1,650 Students Join 12 Courses at IMCG Tarlai Summer School Fiesta to Learn New Skills

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Model College for Girls (IMCG) Tarlai has launched its two-week Summer School & Fiesta 2026, offering 12 diverse courses—the most in the capital—to foster creativity, confidence, communication, and practical skills. The initiative, part of a Federal Directorate of Education program, saw 1,650 students enroll, with the Spoken English Course being the most popular with 700 participants. Other sought-after courses included art, digital marketing, culinary arts, and various crafts. The event was inaugurated by Area Education Officer Dr. Khalid Mahmood and Principal Mrs. Kausar Parveen, who, along with Vice Principal Mrs. Saima Shaheen,



emphasized the importance of such programs in nurturing student talent and providing enriching learning experiences beyond the traditional classroom.

University of Women Multan Signs MoU to Boost Mental Health Initiatives

Iram Asim

MULTAN: The Women University Multan (WUM) and the Punjab Institute of Living and Learning have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to foster collaboration in research, mental health, training, and social welfare. The agreement, signed by WUM Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Syeda Shahida Batool and



Dr. Noor-uz-Zaman Rafique from the Punjab Institute, aims to advance joint research, academic exchanges, capacity

building, and evidence-based initiatives focused on mental health, community welfare, and social development. Both institutions will collaborate on projects to enhance mental health awareness and societal well-being.

Vice Chancellor Batool emphasized the critical role of academic-research partnerships in addressing contemporary social and psycholog-

ical challenges, stating that this collaboration will create new opportunities in mental health and social welfare for WUM. The joint initiatives are expected to yield significant positive outcomes across academic, research, and social spheres. Key figures from WUM, including Dr. Saima Nasreen, Dr. Sadia Musharraf, and Dr. Abida Aziz, were present at the signing ceremony.

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Israel Mourns the U. S.-Iran Deal

The reported agreement between the United States and Iran to halt hostilities and launch a broader diplomatic process has triggered one of the most intense political reactions inside Israel in recent years. While the agreement is being presented internationally as a breakthrough that could end a costly regional confrontation and bring stability to multiple fronts, many Israeli political leaders view it as a strategic setback that leaves critical security concerns unresolved. The controversy has rapidly evolved into a debate not only about Iran, but also about the political future of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

The strongest criticism came from across Israel's political spectrum. Opposition leader Yair Golan described the agreement as evidence that Israel had been sidelined while Washington and Tehran negotiated a framework affecting Israel's security environment. According to Golan, Israelis woke up to an agreement concluded "over Israel's head," a situation he described as the culmination of years of policy failures. He accused Netanyahu of cultivating an image as "Mr. Security" while ultimately presiding over what he called the greatest strategic failure in Israel's history.

Golan's criticism goes beyond the agreement itself. His argument is that after years of military confrontations, diplomatic isolation, and repeated promises of decisive victories, Israel has arrived at a situation where the United States—the country's closest ally—has chosen diplomacy with Iran despite Israeli objections. For Golan and many opposition figures, this outcome demonstrates that

military power alone cannot substitute for effective diplomacy and strategic planning.

Former defense officials and opposition politicians have echoed similar concerns. Benny Gantz described the emerging arrangement as a strategic failure that could create diplomatic, military, and legal challenges for Israel for years to come. Their criticism reflects a growing belief among some Israeli leaders that the war's political objectives were never clearly defined and that the final outcome does not justify the enormous costs incurred during months of conflict.

Yet criticism of the agreement is not limited to Netanyahu's opponents. Members of his own political camp have also expressed deep dissatisfaction, though for very different reasons. National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir rejected the agreement outright. While expressing appreciation for the United States and President Trump, he insisted that Israel is a sovereign nation and is not bound by arrangements negotiated without its participation. Ben-Gvir argued that Israel cannot allow foreign governments to determine its security policies and warned against any restrictions on Israeli military operations in Lebanon or elsewhere.

Ben-Gvir's position reflects a broader sentiment among Israel's nationalist and security-oriented factions. These groups believe that Hezbollah remains a serious threat in Lebanon and that Iran's regional influence has not been suffi-

ciently weakened. From their perspective, any agreement that limits Israel's military freedom while leaving Hezbollah and Iran's strategic capabilities intact represents a dangerous compromise rather than a diplomatic achievement.

Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich has voiced similar concerns. He has consistently advocated a more aggressive security posture and has argued that Israel must reshape the regional balance of power rather than merely manage ongoing threats. Reports indicate that Smotrich views the agreement as harmful to Israel's long-term security interests because it risks preserving the capabilities of forces that Israel has spent years attempting to contain.

What makes these reactions particularly significant is that they reveal a rare convergence between Israel's left-wing opposition and elements of its right-wing coalition. Both sides criticize the agreement, but for opposite reasons. The opposition argues that Netanyahu's policies have failed and isolated Israel. The nationalist right argues that the agreement abandons military gains before strategic objectives have been achieved. Together, these criticisms leave Netanyahu squeezed from both directions.

The agreement has also highlighted growing tensions between Netanyahu and President Trump. For years, many Israeli leaders believed that Washington would support Israel's regional strategy unconditionally. However, the U. S. decision to pursue a diplomatic settlement

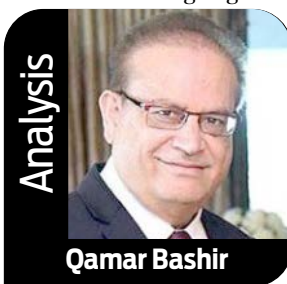
with Iran demonstrates that American and Israeli interests do not always align perfectly. Reports indicate that the negotiations proceeded despite strong objections from Israeli officials, creating the impression that Washington was prepared to prioritize regional stability and economic recovery over the continuation of military operations.

This development carries profound political implications. Netanyahu built much of his political reputation on the promise that he alone could protect Israel from Iran. Yet if the United States has now chosen diplomacy rather than confrontation, many Israelis may question whether Netanyahu's long-standing strategy remains viable. His critics argue that after years of warnings about Iran, the final outcome is an agreement largely negotiated by Washington rather than a decisive military victory achieved by Israel.

The controversy extends beyond domestic politics. Across the Middle East, governments are closely watching how the agreement reshapes regional power dynamics. Supporters believe a ceasefire and diplomatic process could reduce tensions, reopen trade routes, stabilize energy markets, and lower the risk of a wider regional war. Critics fear that sanctions relief and renewed economic activity could strengthen Iran and its allies, giving them greater resources to pursue their strategic objectives.

The debate is therefore not simply about a single agreement. It is about competing visions of security. One vision argues that lasting stability can only emerge through diplomacy and negotiated arrangements. The other argues

Continued on Page 7



Analysis

Qamar Bashir

The Occasion of Desertification and Drought Day

This year's Desertification and Drought Day theme, "Rangelands: Recognise. Respect. Restore.," draws attention to one of the most important natural assets supporting livelihoods, food security and ecological balance across Pakistan. It is a timely reminder that the health of our rangelands is closely linked to the well-being of our people and the resilience of our environment.

Rangelands are vital for sustaining biodiversity, supporting livestock production, regulating water cycles, storing carbon and securing the livelihoods of millions of people. In Pakistan, they form an essential part of our ecological and economic landscape, particularly in arid, semi-arid, mountainous and pastoral regions. They contribute significantly to food security and support the well-being of rural communities.

However, these critical ecosystems face increasing pressures from climate change, recurrent droughts, overgrazing, urbanisation, unsustainable land-use practices and land degradation. The decline of healthy rangelands threatens livelihoods, weakens food systems and reduces our resilience to climate-related disasters.

For many families living in Pakistan's arid and semi-arid regions, the condition of rangelands has a direct impact on daily life. Healthy grazing lands support livestock, sustain household incomes and help secure local food supplies. Protecting these resources is therefore not only an environmental priority but also an important part of supporting rural livelihoods and strengthening local economies.

As one of the countries most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, Pakistan recognises that the sustainable management and restoration of degraded lands are indispensable for environmental sustainability, economic prosperity and social well-being. The Government of Pakistan continues to promote sustainable land management practices, strengthen drought resilience, restore degraded ecosystems and enhance the productivity of forests, rangelands and watersheds.

The theme of this year reminds us that safeguarding our rangelands requires collective responsibility. We must recognise their immense value, respect the traditional knowledge and stewardship of pastoral and local communities and restore degraded landscapes through science-based and community-driven approaches. Investing in healthy rangelands is an investment in food security, biodiversity conservation, climate resilience and sustainable development.

On this important day, I call upon all stakeholders to work together in protecting and restoring Pakistan's rangelands and natural ecosystems. Through sustained commitment and practical action, we can reduce the impact of land degradation, strengthen resilience to drought and preserve these vital resources for the generations that follow.

By recognising, respecting and restoring our rangelands, we can contribute meaningfully to sustainable land management while safeguarding resources that support livelihoods, food security and environmental well-being across Pakistan.



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

Beyond State Rivalry: How the Iran-Israel Crisis Reveals a Multiplex World Order

Muqaddas Tariq

For decades, global politics was viewed through the lens of states competing for power and alliance formation. Military and economic capabilities were the basis of measuring power. Throughout the Cold War's bipolar rivalry or the post-Cold War era of America dominating global affairs, world order was shaped by states as primary actors. However, the ongoing Iran-Israeli conflict suggests that this picture of world order is becoming outdated. Because of the involvement of non-state actors, digital networks, international institutions, economic interests, states' interactions collectively shape outcomes. In doing so, it indicates the emergence of a multiplex world order. Most of the discussion surrounding the Iran-Israel conflict focuses mainly on military strikes, strategic calculations, and regional power politics. Such analyses hold importance, but they often overlook a broader reality that today's conflicts are no longer shaped by governments and forces. Instead, power is increasingly distributed among multiple actors operating at various levels. This shift is captured by the concept of multiplexity, which views the global system as a multiplex cinema where multiple state and non-state actors, global institutions and corporations, along with digital networks simultaneously shape the outcome, but no longer hold monopoly over power.

The Iran-Israel crisis demonstrates this shift. At first glance, their hostility is seen as traditional rivalry rooted in ideological differences, geopolitical competition, and differing in strategic interests. Yet beneath this rivalry lies a complex network of actors that challenges conventional understandings of global politics. The most significant feature of this rivalry is the

central role of armed non-state actors. Actors such as Hezbollah in Lebanon, the Houthis in Yemen, and various militia groups in Iraq and Syria have become prominent actors in regional security and dominance. These groups hold capabilities that enable them to shape the conflict's outcome independently. This reality highlights one of the limitations of traditional approaches to global politics. Classical realism views state as the dominant actor of analysis and assumes that power is concentrated within sovereign governments. Yet non-state actors like Hezbollah and the Houthis possess capabilities that enable them to influence regional stability, disrupt trade routes, and shape strategic calculations far beyond their immediate geographical locations. As in a multiplex world, power is not exercised by governments only; it is distributed among various actors whose influence remains beyond the national borders.

The Iran-Israel conflict also reveals that great power still matters, but they no longer dominate the global politics in the way that traditional theories predict. Although USA remains one of the Israel's closest partners and China and Russia seek greater strategic engagement in the Middle East, but none can dictate outcomes on their own. Their actions are constrained and mediated by regional governments, non-state actors, international institutions, and economic networks, highlighting a system where power is not concentrated but dispersed. This phenomenon reflects the realities of an increasingly multiplex world, where regional actors, proxy groups, international organizations, and economic forces all constrain and define the behavior of major states. International institutions and their behavior further illustrate the changing reality of world order. The United Nations, humanitarian agencies, and multilateral forums play significant roles in framing international reactions and

influencing global discourse surrounding the conflict. Although these institutions often lack enforcement capabilities, they influence public opinion and encourage diplomatic engagement. Their growing relevance reflects a world in which power is distributed across multiple actors and levels of governance, rather than concentrated within sovereign states alone.

Cyber warfare further demonstrates the changing nature of world order and adds another dimension to growing complexity. Cyber warfare adds another layer of complexity. The Iran-Israeli crisis is no longer confined to traditional military domains, it unfolds in cyberspace, where attacks on infrastructure, communication systems, and government networks have become key instruments of strategic competition. Cyber operations often involve state-linked groups, private actors, and anonymous networks, and weaken the conventional notions of deterrence. The economic impact of Iran-Israel rivalry shows that tensions in the Middle East are not confined to the region, they rapidly impact the global economy. Multinational corporations, shipping forms, financial institutions, and energy producers across the world become indirectly affected due to fluctuation in oil prices, and increased shipping and insurance costs.

The battle of narratives has become almost as important as the battle on the ground, and governments no longer hold a monopoly over information. In the previous era, governments largely controlled the flow of information, but today digital activist networks or viral videos from social media platforms can influence international discourse effectively. Technological companies and media platforms have become influential actors to shape a global perspective and are leading towards a multiplex character of world politics. Similarly, Middle powers like

Continued on Page 7

African Markets and Pakistan's Economic Future

The world's economic and political landscape has entered a new era in which the balance of power is no longer determined solely by military strength or political influence. Today, trade, investment, technology, and access to emerging markets play a decisive role in shaping global power dynamics. As the global economy continues to evolve, emerging regions are gaining prominence alongside traditional economic centers. Among these rising economic forces, Africa stands out as a continent with the potential to become one of the most important drivers of global growth in the coming decades.

Blessed with abundant natural resources, a rapidly growing young population, expanding urban markets, vast mineral reserves, agricultural potential, and significant industrial opportunities, Africa has become a focal point for major global powers. Countries such as China, Turkey, Russia, the United States, India, Saudi Arabia, and members of the European Union are already actively strengthening their economic presence across the continent. For Pakistan, this is a crucial moment to adopt a new economic vision and a practical strategy for engaging with Africa.

Pakistan's economy is currently facing several challenges, including a narrow export base, a widening trade deficit, mounting external debt, industrial slowdown, energy shortages, inflation, and declining foreign exchange reserves. Although progress has been made in certain sectors over recent years, the country's exports remain concentrated in a limited range of products and markets. In an era of rapid global economic transformation, relying solely on

traditional trading partners cannot provide a sustainable long-term solution. Exploring new markets has therefore become not merely an option but a national economic necessity, and Africa presents an extraordinary opportunity in this regard.

Africa is the world's second-largest continent, with a population that has already surpassed 1.5 billion people. According to United Nations projections, by 2050 Africa will have the largest youth population in the world. This youthful demographic represents not only a vast labor force but also a rapidly expanding consumer market. The growing middle class across African countries is driving demand for modern products, advanced technology, quality pharmaceuticals, agricultural innovations, construction services, digital solutions, and educational opportunities. These are precisely the sectors in which Pakistan possesses significant strengths and capabilities.

Pakistan's textile industry enjoys a strong reputation internationally, and African markets offer substantial potential for high-quality and competitively priced Pakistani textile products. Similarly, Pakistan's pharmaceutical sector, surgical instruments, sports goods, rice, agricultural products, leather goods, and information technology services can establish a strong presence across the continent. The country's IT industry has experienced remarkable growth in recent years, and Pakistani software engineers, technology experts, and freelancers can play a meaningful role in supporting digital transformation, e-governance, fintech solutions, and e-commerce development in African nations.

Continued on Page 7



Analysis

Dr. Shahbaz Ali Malik

Ethiopia and Pakistan Establish Joint Rectors' Forum to Advance Academic Cooperation

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD/ADDIS ABABA: Under the facilitation of OIC's Standing Committee on Science and Technology (OIC-COMSTECH), the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan have formed a Joint Rectors' Forum comprising ten premier institutions, five from each nation, to boost academic, scientific, and technological collaboration.

The initiative was officially announced during the OIC-COMSTECH-Ethiopia-Pakistan Joint Forum which was held here in Islamabad through a video conference.

During the fruitful session, H. E. Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary, the Coordinator General of OIC-COMSTECH highlighted

key areas of strategic cooperation, which was further catalyzed by a powerful opening address from H. E. Dr. Oumer Hussien Oba, the Ambassador of Ethiopia to Pakistan.

The Ambassador underscored Ethiopia's massive transformation into a knowledge-based economy driven by a 70:30 STEM education national policy, as well as an expanding health-care research ecosystem.

The newly formed forum strategically links Pakistan's renowned university consortium with Ethiopia's growing public health and technology sectors.

Participating Ethiopian institutions include the Addis Ababa Institute of Technology (AAIT), Addis Ababa Science and Technology University (AASTU), Adama Science and Technology University (ASTU), University

of Gondar, and Tikur Anbessa Specialized Hospital under Addis Ababa University. They are joined by premier Pakistani counterparts including the University of Lahore (UoL), National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST), COMSATS University Islamabad (CUI), the International Center for Chemical and Biological Sciences (ICCBS), and the Centre of Excellence in Molecular Biology (CEMB).

Moving forward, the alliance will focus on collaborative research and development in advanced technologies and medical sciences. The initiative is designed to facilitate academic mobility through student exchange programs and the movement of faculty members, alongside creating comprehensive institutional twinning mechanisms between matched univer-



sities. To translate this diplomatic agreement into an actionable operational matrix, both sides have agreed to form a joint technical team tasked with guiding future operations.

Marking an immediate and tangible outcome of the joint forum, COMSATS University announced the provision of 25 scholarships for Ethiopian students. This commitment paves the way for human resource development and laid a strong foundation for fostering an intellectual partnership between the two nations.

OIC-COMSTECH has also expressed its willingness to host representatives of leading Ethiopian universities in Islamabad, with a view to further strengthening academic, research, and institutional collaboration between the two sides.

Water availability shrinks as the investment gap increases in Pakistan: UN reports

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Women and girls spend 250 million hours every day on water collection globally, over three times more than men and boys. This disparity affects their education, health and income.

This is one of the key findings of the three water-related publications that were jointly launched today in Islamabad – as part of the extended celebrations of World Water Day – by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The event also counted with the collaboration of the Pakistan Council of Research in Water Resources (PCRWR), the Global Climate Change Impact Studies Centre (GCISC), the Economic Cooperation Organization Science Foundation (ECOSF) and UNESCO Water Chair on Knowledge Systems for IWRM at COMSATS University Islamabad.

The UN World Water Development Report 2026 presented today in Pakistan reports that 2.1 billion people still lack safely managed drinking water, while 3.4 billion people do not have access to safely managed sanitation



services – while 1.7 billion do not have basic hygiene services at home. In Pakistan, according to WHO and UNICEF estimates, around 55% of the population lacks access to safely managed drinking water and over 58% of the population living in rural areas does not have safely managed sanitation services.

"At the time of independence, each Pakistani had access to over 5,000 cubic meters of fresh water annually, now Pakistan is below 1,000," said Pakistan's Federal Minister for Water Resources Mian Muhammad Mueen Wattoo during the event.

"Water solutions should be inclusive, practical and embedded in local knowledge," said Mohamed Yahya, United Nations Resident Coordinator

in Pakistan.

As water availability shrinks, the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) investment gap for urban areas has increased in Pakistan, while the deficit in rural areas has decreased, compared to the 2021/2022 period, according to the UN-Water Global Analysis and Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking-Water (GLAAS) 2025 Report – also launched today.

According to the GLASS report, in Pakistan, the combined Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) budgets of the four provincial governments and the Islamabad Capital Territory increased from 225 billion to 265 billion Pakistani rupees (US\$ 808 million to US\$ 952 million) from 2022 to 2024 – an 18% nominal increase.

However, due to high inflation over the same period, this represents a 20% decrease in real terms.

The "Guidelines for Science Policy Practice Interface (SSPI) for Achieving Water Security in Pakistan" – presented by UNESCO and Pakistan's Council of Research in Water Resources during the event – provide guidance to bridging the gap between scientists, policymakers and practitioners for these challenges.

A high-level round table chaired by Mr. Fuad Pashayev, Representative of UNESCO in Pakistan, focused on the key findings and recommendations emerging from the three publications. The session highlighted the growing urgency of addressing the interconnected challenges of water security, climate change, and social inclusion.

The round table featured contributions from Ms. Pernille Ironside, Representative of UNICEF Pakistan; Mr. Fahim Ahmed, Technical Specialist, UNDP Pakistan; and Ms. Ellen Thom, Deputy Representative, WHO Pakistan. Discussions explored global and national trends in water security, sanitation, public health, climate adaptation, and the importance of strengthening the science-policy-practice interface to accelerate progress towards Sustainable Development Goal 6.

ISSI hosts Seminar on "Decoding the Future Trajectory of Pakistan-India Relations"

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabad (ISSI) hosted a seminar titled "Decoding the Future Trajectory of Pakistan-India Relations," with former Foreign Minister Engr. Khurram Dastgir Khan as the Chief Guest.

Ambassador Khalid Mahmood, Chairman ISSI, opened by noting the mixed history of Pakistan-India relations, suggesting India's strategy to isolate Pakistan had backfired, though cautioning against immediate optimism due to lingering threats. He advocated for structured dialogue. Chief Guest Khurram Dastgir Khan highlighted Pakistan's recent diplomatic leverage from the US-Iran conflict, urging its application in India relations.

He expressed concern over obstacles like the Kashmir dispute, terrorism



allegations, nationalism, nuclear issues, and water disputes (particularly the Indus Water Treaty) potentially leading to confrontation.

Dr. Khurram Abbas described Pakistan-India ties as globally significant but currently at their worst, with even settled issues like water-sharing becoming contentious.

He stressed the responsibility of academics and civil society to foster peace and overcome the stalemate. Ambassador Abdul Basit stated both

nations lacked innovative ideas for constructive engagement.

He cautioned against Indian overtures, emphasizing Pakistan's need to prioritize its long-term interests over open-ended dialogue, and stressed that Confidence Building Measures require a mechanism to address core issues like Kashmir.

Dr. Manzoor Ahmed identified trade as the primary casualty, with Pakistan incurring higher costs through indirect trade. He cited a World Bank study

suggesting significant export potential from India and called for decoupling trade from political disputes.

Dr. Mujeeb Afzal provided a historical context of the Kashmir dispute, noting it's deeply embedded in national identities, making resolution difficult. He added that India's actions regarding the Indus Waters Treaty further complicate relations, making constructive engagement and lasting peace unlikely. The seminar concluded with a Q&A session.

Palestinian Presidency warns over Israeli minister's announcement to cancel Hebron agreements

Wafa

RAMALLAH: The Palestinian Presidency warned of the seriousness of a move announced by a minister in Israel's right-wing government to cancel the Hebron agreements related to the Ibrahimi Mosque area and transfer related powers from the Hebron municipality.



The Presidency said the step affects the political and legal status of the city of Hebron and the bilateral agreements concerning it.

It stressed that such unilateral measures are rejected and condemned, and constitute a violation of signed agreements with the Israeli side, as well as a breach of international law and international legitimacy, which prohibit altering the status quo in the occupied territory of the State of Palestine.

The Presidency called on the international community, particularly the United States administration, to intervene immediately and compel Israeli authorities to reverse what it described as a highly dangerous decision.

It warned that the move undermines the political process, the two-state solution, and international efforts aimed at achieving security and stability in the region and creating the conditions necessary for advancing a two-state solution based on the 1967 borders.

LAAM Fashion Week Returns October 2026: Connecting Pakistani Design Globally

News Desk

LAHORE: LAAM Fashion Week (LFW) is returning for its second edition in Lahore in October 2026, aiming to strengthen and connect the Pakistani fashion industry. Designer registrations are now open for brands, labels, and emerging talents. Co-created by LAAM and Design651, LFW merges physical runway shows with real-time e-commerce via LAAM's platform, connecting creativity with commerce. The inaugural LFW was a success, showcasing over 37 designers and achieving significant global reach with over 1 billion total reach and 10 million livestream views in 100+ countries. Collections were accessible to over 15 million users worldwide. This momentum is fueled by LAAM's extensive digital ecosystem, boasting 6 million monthly active users and over 4,000 sellers. LFW2 will build upon the runway-to-e-tail model, making collections available for immediate purchase. LAAM's leadership emphasizes LFW's role in making Pakistani fashion accessible, measurable, and globally connected, fostering commercial opportunities for designers. Design651 highlights LFW's aim to bring structure and credibility to fashion presentation, supporting designers and expanding customer access globally. LFW2 arrives as Pakistani fashion gains international recognition, reinforcing LAAM's digital-first approach to sales and scaling.



Business Community hosts farewell reception for CTO Muhammad Sarfraz Virk and warm welcome for CTO Kainat Azhar Khan

News Desk

ISLAMABAD: A graceful dinner reception was organized in Islamabad by prominent business leaders in honor of outgoing Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Islamabad, Muhammad Sarfraz Virk, and to warmly welcome the newly appointed CTO Islamabad, Kainat Azhar Khan. The event brought together the leadership of Islamabad and Rawalpindi Chambers of Commerce, presidents of various markets, representatives of the business community, and senior police officials. The dinner was hosted by Ahsan Bakhtawari, former President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (ICCI) and CEO of D. Watson Group.

Welcoming the distinguished guests, Ahsan Bakhtawari extended a warm welcome to Kainat Azhar Khan and appreciated the remarkable services rendered by Muhammad Sarfraz Virk during his tenure as CTO Islamabad. He said that Virk maintained excellent coordination with the business community and played an important role in resolving traffic and market-related issues, particularly in commercial centers and business areas of Islamabad.

Ahsan Bakhtawari stated that the presence of presidents and representatives of various markets at the gathering reflected the strong relationship between the police administration and the business community. He expressed hope

that Kainat Azhar Khan would continue the same spirit of cooperation and public service for the facilitation of traders and citizens.

Chairman Founder Group, Sheikh Tariq Sadiq, while addressing the gathering, thanked Ahsan Bakhtawari for organizing the reception and bringing together the business community and police leadership on one platform.

Speaking on the occasion, former CTO Islamabad Muhammad Sarfraz Virk said that the business community is the backbone of the national economy and there has always been a strong two-way relationship between the police administration and traders. He said that during his tenure, he sincerely tried to provide the best possible services and solutions to

the traders and citizens. He assured that he would continue extending his support and cooperation to the business community whenever needed in the future as well. Virk also expressed confidence in the capabilities of incoming CTO Kainat Azhar Khan and hoped that she would continue serving the city with dedication and professionalism.

Addressing the participants, Kainat Azhar Khan thanked the organizers and the business community for the warm welcome accorded to her. She said that effective traffic management and public facilitation require mutual cooperation between the administration and citizens. She expressed hope that the business community would fully cooperate with her



in carrying out her responsibilities efficiently and effectively. Saif ur Rehman Khan, Chairman Police Committee ICCI, appreciated the dedication and services of police officers and acknowledged the important role played by Islamabad Police in maintaining law and order and

facilitating citizens. Chairman Group Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Sohail Altaf, also congratulated Kainat Azhar Khan on her appointment and said that the business leadership has great expectations from her. The event was conducted by

Yousaf Rajput, President Blue Area Traders Association, who highly acknowledged the participation of the business community leaders, chamber representatives, and police officers, and emphasized the importance of continued coordination between the Police and Business Community.

Bull & Bears
PSX 100-Share
Index Fluctuation

Pakistan: PSX 100-Share Index		
Current	Prev. Close	
180,392.97	177,039.82	
Day's High	Day's Low	
180,503.55	177,741.46	
Index Value	Change	
56,241,134,692	+3353.15	
Percentage	Time	
+1.89%	16 Jun, 2026 4:30 pm	
Europe: FTSE 100 Index		
Index Value	Change	
10,494.21	+63.59	
Percentage	Time	
+0.61%	16 Jun, 4:35 pm GMT+1	
USA: Dow Jones Industrial Average		
Index Value	Change	
52,148.85	+477.82	
Percentage	Time	
+0.92%	16 Jun, 1:29 pm GMT-4	
Asia Pacific: Nikkei Stocks Average		
Index Value	Change	
69,404.50	+87.00	
Percentage	Time	
+0.13%	16 Jun, 3:45 pm GMT+9	
Open Market Forex Rates		
Currency	Buying	Selling
Australian Dollar	194.84	198.75
Bahrain Dinar	738.61	748.65
Canadian Dollar	197.97	203.25
China Yuan	38.05	38.80
Danish Krone	43.39	43.79
Euro	323	327.75
Hong Kong Dollar	35.10	35.95
Indian Rupee	2.75	3.05
Japanese Yen	1.7264	1.8256
Kuwaiti Dinar	886.34	896.85
Malaysian Ringgit	67.05	67.90
New Zealand \$	160.22	164.85
Norwegians Krone	27.88	28.18
Omani Riyal	723.42	733.82
Qatari Riyal	75.19	76.15
Saudi Riyal	74.30	74.90
Singapore Dollar	214.65	219.64
Swedish Korona	30.27	30.57
Swiss Franc	346.94	351.95
Thai Bhat	8.55	8.80
U.A.E Dirham	76.00	76.75
UK Pound Sterling	373.90	377.45
US Dollar	279.05	279.45

Dr. Kabir Sidhu Unveils Reform Agenda to Expand Investor Base, Deepen Capital Markets

Commerce Desk

KARACHI: SECP Chairman Dr. Kabir Ahmed Sidhu Monday unveiled an ambitious reform agenda focused on expanding Pakistan's investor base, strengthening financial literacy, and deepening capital markets during his first visit to the Pakistan Stock Exchange.

Addressing the Gong Ceremony, Dr. Sidhu said SECP aims to significantly grow investor participation, targeting 2.5 million investors long-term. He stressed that broadening access, especially for young Pakistanis, is key to promoting savings, wealth creation and inclusive growth. "Financial literacy is one of the most powerful tools for expanding participation. We want young Pakistanis to learn, invest and participate through accessible education and simplified investment processes," he said.

The Chairman outlined reforms built on People, Processes and Technology. Plans include revitalizing the Institute of Financial Markets of Pakistan, launching short online financial courses, expanding nationwide investor awareness campaigns, and simplifying digital onboarding. He also highlighted



insurance sector reforms through new legislation to modernize the industry, boost competition and improve penetration.

PSX Managing Director Farrukh H. Sabzwari welcomed the initiatives, noting PSX market capitalization has reached PKR

20 trillion with average daily volumes of 57 million shares and 11 IPOs this fiscal year, the third highest in 25 years. The recent SLM Tyres listing marked a historic milestone. The investor base has grown to 563,000 unique investor numbers, driven by Millennials and Gen Z. Over the past three years PSX delivered 95%, 57% and 44% returns, ranking among top frontier markets.

SECP Commissioner Ali Farid Khawaja said improved macroeconomic stability and regulatory reforms have fueled market resilience. He emphasized sustaining reforms, broadening participation and strengthening infrastructure for next-phase growth.

In the PSX Board meeting chaired by Dr. Sidhu, discussions covered launching ETFs linked to Chinese and Saudi markets, improving GEM Board listings, developing derivatives, enhancing surveillance, and boosting efficiency at PSX, CDC and NCCPL through technology. Strategies to attract overseas Pakistanis and foreign investors were also reviewed. Dr. Sidhu assured SECP's full support for a deeper, efficient and investor-friendly market.

Defense Production

The Ministry of Defence Production hosted a high-level defence delegation from Ghana on 16 June 2026, focusing on deepening bilateral defence ties.



Punjab Budget Hailed as Pro-Poor and Development-Oriented

Commerce Desk

LAHORE: SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry former President Iftikhar Ali Malik, Tuesday congratulated Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz for presenting a pro-poor and development-oriented tax-free Punjab budget.

Giving his reaction on Punjab budget, he noted that the tax-free nature of the budget would reduce the burden on common citizens and encourage business confidence, especially among small and medium enterprises. He hoped that efficient and transparent implementation of the budgetary allocations would bring tangible improvement

in the quality of life for the people of Punjab and set a benchmark for other provinces.

He lauded the CM visionary approach aimed at uplifting underprivileged segments of society while simultaneously accelerating infrastructure development, health, education, and agriculture sectors. He said the budget reflects the CM's deep commitment to inclusive growth and economic stability in the province. He particularly appreciated the allocation of funds for youth empowerment, skill development, and women-focused initiatives, which he termed as crucial steps towards sustainable prosperity.

easypaisa Leads Digitization of Payments at Islamabad International Airport



Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Easypaisa, Pakistan's digital bank, in partnership with the Pakistan Airports Authority (PAA) and the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), has digitized payment systems at Islamabad International Airport.

QR codes have been implemented at key consumer touchpoints, allowing seamless QR and digital wallet payments for millions of travelers annually.

This initiative supports the national agenda for a cashless economy and financial inclusion, according to

Air Vice Marshal Zeeshan Saeed, Director General of PAA. Shahzad Khan, Chief Business Officer at easypaisa, highlighted the collaboration's role in accelerating the Prime Minister's cashless economy agenda and the SBP's vision for financial inclusion, ensuring secure and accessible financial

services for travelers.

Easypaisa, with over 60 million users, is committed to expanding QR-based payments and offering a wide range of financial products to both banked and unbanked populations, contributing to Pakistan's digital economy and inclusive economic growth.

inDrive kicks off campaign to reward fuel vouchers to 2,500 drivers across Pakistan

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: inDrive, the country's leading global mobility and urban services platform, has officially kicked off its highly anticipated nationwide driver appreciation campaign, "Sahi intekhaab ka sahi innaam". The mega-campaign is designed exclusively to reward the hard work, consistency, and dedication of inDrive's driver community with fuel vouchers across Karachi, Lahore, and Islamabad.

The platform has committed to distributing a pool of 2,500+ high-value prizes over the campaign's duration. The grand prizes include 3 Suzuki Alto VXR cars, 15 Honda CG125 motorcycles, and 10 Siwa rickshaws, along with 60 smartphones and 2,500 fuel vouchers.

To enter the raffle, drivers in Karachi, Lahore, and

Islamabad must maintain "active" status by completing a minimum of 50 rides per week.

To mark the operational rollout of the initiative, inDrive successfully hosted its first session in early June, officially announcing the first batch of 1000 fuel voucher winners from the pool of eligible captains. The remaining 2,000 vouchers will be distributed evenly across four upcoming sessions scheduled throughout the campaign period.

"Drivers are the backbone of the ride-hailing ecosystem we have built in Pakistan," said Muhammad Awais Saeed, Country Lead for inDrive Pakistan.

"Awarding these first 1000 fuel vouchers is just the beginning of a sustained effort to alleviate operational costs for our most dedicated drivers during this high-demand summer season."

PFC terms Punjab budget as people friendly tax free and economic development oriented



Commerce Desk

LAHORE: Chief Executive Officer Pakistan Furniture Council Mian Kashif Ashfaq, Sitara-I-Imtiaz, Tuesday termed Punjab budget as pro poor people friendly tax free and economic development oriented with major thrust on better health cover, promotion of quality education, strengthening of agriculture besides fully bolstering small and medium enterprises for quick economic growth.

Commenting on the 2026-27 annual budget of Punjab Mian Kashif Ashfaq said major allocations in health, education, infrastructure development, roads, communication and basket of excellent package of incentives for industries reflected clear vision and operational framework of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz to ameliorate a lot of the down trodden.

He said this budget will promise sustained economic development, prosperity and better quality of life of people from all strata of society. He said special package for industrialists will help accelerate the economic activities and boost industrial production in addition to strengthen of national economy on sound footings. He said agriculture and economy are interlinked sectors with each other which always play key role towards development, progress and prosperity which he added needs to be fully supported on top priority to achieve the desired results.

Lewandowski Named Chery Global Ambassador, Chery Master Pakistan Celebrates

Commerce Desk

Chery has appointed football icon Robert Lewandowski as its Global Brand Ambassador, reinforcing the "For Family" philosophy. This partnership, announced at Chery's European Operations Centre, aligns Lewandowski's values of professionalism, discipline, and family with Chery's vision.

Lewandowski expressed his delight in partnering with a brand that prioritizes family, sharing a commitment to excellence and family values.

Chery's "For Family" approach guides their product development, focusing on space, safety, and technology for intelligent mobility solutions.

The collaboration strongly resonates in Pakistan, where family is central to mobility choices. Chery Master Pakistan, leveraging Master Group's expertise, has introduced a lineup of locally assembled Plug-in Hybrid Electric Vehicles (PHEVs) like the Tiggo 7, Tiggo 8, and Tiggo 9. These vehicles embody Chery's "Technology" and "Safety" For Family principles, offering advanced technology,

safety, comfort, efficiency, and practicality for Pakistani families.

The partnership with Lewandowski signifies a shared commitment to excellence and innovation, paving the way for Chery's broader football and family engagement initiatives, fostering connections through a shared passion for the sport, especially in the lead-up to the 2026 FIFA World Cup.

Chery Master Pakistan will continue to offer vehicles with global 5-star quality, advanced technology, and practical value, making the future



of intelligent mobility accessible to Pakistani families.

Criticism Following Consecutive Defeats in the FIH Pro League

Abdul Majid

FAISALABAD: Pakistan's journey in the FIH Pro League has certainly not gone according to expectations. However, every difficult period carries within it the promise of a new beginning. Defeats are never the end of the story; they can also be the first lines of a new chapter where hard work, determination, and learning begin.

By competing against some of the world's best teams, our players have gained invaluable experience that no training camp can provide. These very players represent Pakistan's future in upcoming major events, including the Asian Games and the Hockey World Cup.

In several matches, despite conceding early goals, the national team refused

to give up. Their efforts to score until the final whistle, earn penalty corners, and maintain pressure on opponents demonstrate that the fighting spirit of the Green Shirts remains very much alive. In hockey, a comeback from 3-0 down is never impossible, and this resilience will prove valuable in the future.

Considering the difficult circumstances of recent years, limited funding, and the lack of consistent international exposure, the expectation that our team should immediately defeat higher-ranked opponents is actually a reflection of the nation's immense love and passion for its national sport. Such expectations and pressure remind the players that an entire nation stands behind them. For any team, the faith of its supporters is the greatest source of motivation.

Defensive lapses and missed opportunities have undoubtedly been disappointing. Improving coordination in the defensive line, enhancing drag-flick accuracy, and making better decisions under pressure are key areas that can bring significant improvement over the next six months.

Alongside criticism on social media, thousands of supporters have also expressed messages of encouragement, saying, "We stand with you." This support gives players the confidence to rise again. It is worth remembering that even before winning the 1994 Hockey World Cup, Pakistan went through a challenging phase.

The Pro League experience has not come free of cost—it is an investment in the future. What is needed now is for the

federation, coaches, and players to come together and focus on a long-term vision rather than short-term fixes. More international matches, greater emphasis on fitness, and strengthening the domestic hockey structure are essential steps that can help Pakistan return to the ranks of the world's top teams.

It is also important to note that neighboring India, a higher-ranked team with a stronger domestic structure, significantly greater financial resources, and its own professional league, has also struggled in the Pro League and has yet to secure a victory. Keeping this perspective in mind, fans are urged to continue their criticism where necessary, but not abandon the team. When these young players succeed, it will be a victory celebrated by the entire nation.

PTF President Thanks KP Government for Recognizing Tennis Stars

Sports Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Tennis Federation (PTF) expresses its sincere gratitude to Mr. Taj Muhammad Khan Tarang, Adviser to the Chief Minister for Sports and Youth Affairs, Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, for recognizing and encouraging the achievements of Pakistan's talented tennis players.

Mr. Aisam-ul-Haq Qureshi, President of the Pakistan Tennis Federation, appreciated the support of the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the Directorate General Sports Khyber Pakhtunkhwa under the leadership of Mr. Taj Muhammad Khan Tarang and Mr. Tasfeen Haider, Director General Sports.

He stated that PTF has been continuously training Muhammad Shoaib Khan and other talented players at the PTF Training Centre, Islamabad, by providing professional coaching, modern facilities, international exposure, and opportunities to participate in international tour-

naments.

Mr. Aisam-ul-Haq further said that the recognition of Muhammad Shoaib Khan, winner of the ITF Futures International Tennis Championship 2026, along with encouragement for promising junior players including Muhammad Faizan and Shayan Afridi, reflects a strong commitment towards sports development and youth empowerment.

He added that such support and incentives motivate young athletes and contribute significantly to the promotion and development of tennis in Pakistan. He also expressed hope that the governments of Punjab and Sindh would introduce similar sponsorship and incentive programs for deserving athletes.

Col. Zia ud Din Tufail, Secretary General-PTF, said that the Pakistan Tennis Federation remains committed to nurturing talented players and providing opportunities for them to excel at national and international levels.



Trump says Iran deal to be public soon and will rule out nuclear weapon for Tehran

Continued From page 1

Two other issues that Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu used to justify the war—ending Iran's support for regional armed proxies and curbing its missile programme—are not thought to be on the agenda for those negotiations.

"Iran wants to get it done," Trump told reporters about the next phase of negotiations with Iran. "They have to get back to business, and the relationship is now normalized, so I think it's going to go pretty quickly." Earlier he described the deal as "a wall to a nuclear weapon" for Iran.

Vice President JD Vance and Iran's top negotiator Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf are expected to attend Friday's formal signing.

Final Deal Yet To Take Shape

Oil prices slid more than 2% to new three-month lows on Tuesday, a day after tumbling nearly 5% following news of the deal, though industry officials say Middle East oil and gas output will take months to fully recover.

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian wrote on social media Monday that the interim agreement was an "important

step" toward stopping the fighting but noted a final deal for a lasting truce "has yet to take shape."

Vance told CNN that the signed memorandum was a "very general document." Details would be released over the next two days, US officials said.

Both sides still face pressures following a conflict that killed at least 7,000 people, mostly in Iran and Lebanon, and upended global energy markets.

The accord exposes Trump to criticism from within his own party, while Iran's leaders could face the risk of renewed protests if they fail to alleviate economic pressures after a destructive war.

US and Iranian officials say the deal could eventually deliver substantial economic benefits to Iran by lifting sanctions and unfreezing foreign assets. It could also set up a \$300 billion reconstruction fund, paid for by neighbouring Gulf states that host US military bases and were hit by Iranian attacks during the war.

US officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, said Iran would have to satisfy US demands never to build a nuclear weapon and cut off support for militias like Hezbollah in Lebanon in

order to get those benefits.

Iranian officials, who have always denied intending to build a nuclear weapon, say they have given up little by agreeing to resume diplomatic discussions over Iran's uranium enrichment programme that were interrupted by the war.

Caution Over Shipping

Both sides say the Strait of Hormuz, which normally carries about one-fifth of the world's trade in oil and liquefied natural gas, will be open from Friday.

On Tuesday, Iranian state television reported operations to lift its maritime blockade, while stressing that vessels must still coordinate with Iran's Revolutionary Guards.

Trump said earlier that tankers were starting to move out of the strait, and Reuters reported that the US—which had imposed its own blockade on Iranian ports—had been overseeing scores of secretive ship-to-ship oil transfers to keep Gulf energy exports flowing.

The US said the strait will be open toll-free for 60 days and it would expect that provision to be part of a final agreement. Iran has suggested it will retain control with Oman over the strait.

Shippers say a return to normal traffic will be gradual.

One concern is the possible presence of mines in the narrow waterway between Iran and Oman. A thorough minesweeping operation would "take weeks to months", an official with Greek maritime security company Diaplos told Reuters on Tuesday.

Uncertainty Over Lebanon

The conflict between US ally Israel and the Iran-allied Hezbollah militia in Lebanon, which has uprooted 1.2 million people, remains another complication.

Iran has said the deal requires a full cessation of hostilities there, but Netanyahu said Israel would keep its forces in southern Lebanon and retain the right to respond to Hezbollah attacks.

Trump has expressed frustration at Israel's military campaign, saying on Tuesday he was "not happy" with the way Israel had handled itself. Israel has not directly participated in the peace talks with Iran.

A US official said an Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon, which it invaded in March after Hezbollah joined the war, was not a condition of the deal.

Araqchi said Israeli attacks must stop immediately.

Punjab Gears Up for Peaceful Muharram with Enhanced Security Measures



The Ittehad-e-Bain-ul-Muslimeen (IBM) Committee Punjab has finalized security and administrative measures for Muharram 1448 AH to ensure law and order and sectarian harmony. A high-level meeting, chaired by Senior Provincial Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb, reviewed arrangements, with Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif directing the sealing of open manholes and the presence of field hospitals along procession routes.

She emphasized police responsibility and public cooperation, assuring robust security for majalis and processions and advocating for the use of advanced technology. Provincial Ministers Marriyum Aurangzeb, Khawaja Salman Rafique, and Bilal Yasin highlighted safeguarding sectarian harmony as a national duty, vowing vigilance against disruptive elements.

Religious scholars were urged to promote brotherhood and tolerance. Secretary/Chief Administrator Auqaf Punjab, Dr. Ehsan Bhutta, reported foolproof security at shrines and mosques, continuous liaison with agencies, and coordination meetings with local peace committees.

He also detailed "Azaazia Cards" for imams and infrastructure projects for shrine development, including upgrades to major shrines. A resolution was signed by scholars, and Maulana Abdul Khabir Azad praised Pakistan's leadership for mediating peace between the US and Iran, enhancing Pakistan's global standing. He concluded with a prayer for Muslim unity, Pakistan's stability, and the elimination of sectarian discord, pledging the IBM Committee's full cooperation with law enforcement for a peaceful Muharram.

Israel Mourns the U.S.-Iran Deal

Continued from Page 4

that diplomacy without overwhelming military leverage merely postpones future conflicts. Israel now finds itself at the center of that debate.

As elections approach and political pressure intensifies, the reported U.S.-Iran agreement may become a defining moment in Israeli politics. For Netanyahu's opponents, it is evidence of diplomatic failure and strategic miscalculation. For his right-wing allies, it is evidence that Israel must maintain complete freedom of action regardless of international agreements. For the broader Israeli public, it raises difficult questions about the country's future security strategy and

its relationship with its most important ally.

Whether the agreement ultimately succeeds or fails, one conclusion is already evident: the political battle it has unleashed inside Israel may prove as consequential as the diplomatic breakthrough itself. The fiercest struggle may no longer be taking place between Washington and Tehran, but within Israel's own political establishment as leaders compete to define the meaning of this historic and controversial moment.

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Beyond State Rivalry: How the Iran-Israel Crisis Reveals a Multiplex World Order

Continued from Page 4

Pakistan, Türkiye, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia rather than relying solely on military and economic power, have attempted to shape regional and global responses through coalition-building, and diplomatic engagement, further highlights the emergence of a multiplex world order.

The broader lesson from the ongoing Iran Israel rivalry is that world is undergoing a significant transformation. Now power is no longer centered in the hands of sovereign States; rather is fragmented, and multidimensional. States remain central actors; they now operate alongside militias, multinational corporations, media platforms, cyber actors, interna-

tional organizations, and all these affect the political and security outcomes of war. Therefore, understanding contemporary conflicts requires looking beyond the traditional ideas of power politics and recognizing the fragmented and increasingly interconnected nature of world politics. Ultimately, Iran-Israel conflict is a window that reflects the evolving structure of the international order. The lesson is clear: the world is no longer a multipolar world. It is increasingly multiplex, and the Iran-Israel crisis is the clearest example of this transformation.

Author is a student of international relations at NDU with a keen interest in global politics and emerging trends in the international system.

African Markets and Pakistan's Economic Future

Continued from Page 4

Unfortunately, Pakistan has historically limited its engagement with African countries largely to diplomatic relations, while insufficient attention has been given to economic and commercial cooperation. In contrast, countries such as India, China, and Turkey have not only introduced their products into African markets but have also established a strong presence through large-scale investments, infrastructure projects, educational partnerships, and industrial collaborations. If Pakistan continues to adhere to conventional approaches, it risks falling behind in one of the most significant economic opportunities of the twenty-first century.

Pakistan's "Look Africa Policy" reflects the growing recognition that sustainable economic growth

requires stronger engagement with emerging regions such as Africa. However, policies do not succeed through announcements alone. They require a comprehensive strategy, active diplomacy, private-sector participation, and long-term commitment. Pakistani embassies should not be confined to traditional political representation; they must also serve as centers for trade promotion, investment facilitation, and business networking. Likewise, chambers of commerce, exporters, investors, and industrial associations should be equipped with practical market intelligence, business guidance, and access to African markets.

Africa offers vast investment opportunities in sectors such as energy, mining, agriculture, construction, food production, infrastructure, healthcare, and

education. By participating in joint ventures, industrial partnerships, and technology transfer initiatives, Pakistani companies can expand their footprint across the continent. Such engagement would not only boost Pakistan's exports but also create new employment opportunities, support industrial expansion, and increase foreign exchange earnings. In particular, Pakistan's experience in agriculture could prove highly beneficial for African countries seeking to improve productivity through modern farming techniques and technological innovation.

Africa's strategic importance is also growing in the sphere of international politics. Within the United Nations and many other global institutions, African nations collectively hold significant influence and increasingly

play a decisive role in shaping international decisions. By building stronger economic and commercial ties with Africa, Pakistan can also achieve important diplomatic gains. Economic cooperation often strengthens political relationships and facilitates the advancement of shared interests on international platforms.

Another important factor is the emergence of new economic blocs and regional cooperation frameworks worldwide. Africa's landmark initiative, the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), is transforming the continent into one of the world's largest integrated markets. If Pakistan engages with this economic transformation at the right time, it can gain access not merely to individual countries but to an entire continental market.

Missing this opportunity could prove to be a significant strategic and economic mistake.

Pakistan must therefore complement domestic economic reforms with a modern and forward-looking external economic policy. Dependence on traditional markets and limited economic thinking is no longer sufficient in an increasingly interconnected world. The nations that will thrive in the future are those that identify emerging opportunities, establish new partnerships, and act decisively to secure their place in evolving global markets. Through coordinated efforts involving the government, private sector, investors, entrepreneurs, and educational institutions, Pakistan can build stronger economic links with Africa and unlock new pathways for growth and prosperity.

With this vision in mind, the Pakistan-Africa Economic Council is actively working to promote trade, investment, and economic cooperation between the two regions. Our objective is not merely to increase trade statistics but to provide Pakistani traders, industrialists, young investors, and entrepreneurs with practical access to African markets. By creating meaningful business connections and facilitating commercial engagement, we aim to help establish a stronger foundation for Pakistan's economic future. This is not simply an economic initiative; it is a vision for the future of Pakistan.

Economic stability cannot be achieved through statistics alone or through short-term policy measures. It requires a long-term vision, consistency, a clear understanding of

global trends, and timely decision-making. Today, Pakistan has an opportunity to redefine its relationship with Africa and significantly expand its exports, investment flows, industrial growth, and employment opportunities. If we make informed decisions, adopt a coherent strategy, and respond effectively to changing global economic realities, Africa can become far more than just another continent for Pakistan. It can emerge as a gateway to economic opportunity, sustainable development, and shared prosperity. In the years ahead, this partnership has the potential to contribute significantly to Pakistan's economic independence, industrial strength, and global economic influence.

The writer is Chairman, Pakistan Africa Economic Council.

Meeting

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, holding a meeting with Mr. Hamish Falconer, MP, parliamentary Under-secretary of State for the Middle East, Afghanistan and Pakistan (MENAP), United Kingdom, and H.E. Ms. Jane Marriott, British High Commissioner to Pakistan, at the Finance Division on Tuesday.



Photo: PID

DPM Dar lauds China's consistent support for Pakistan's dialogue, diplomacy facilitation between Iran, US

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister (DPM/FM), Senator Muhammad Ishaq Dar on Tuesday held a telephone conversation with Member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and Foreign Minister of China, Wang Yi and lauded China's consistent support for Pakistan's efforts to facilitate dialogue and diplomacy between Iran and the United States.

The two leaders welcomed the understandings reached in the Iran-U. S. Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), describing the

consensus as an important step towards promoting sustainable peace and stability in the region, a DPM's Office news release said.

Foreign Minister Wang Yi commended Pakistan's proactive diplomatic outreach and robust mediation efforts, which helped create conducive conditions for sustained engagement between Iran and the United States. He appreciated Pakistan for making a vital contribution to advancing international peace and stability.

He also acknowledged China's important contributions for the restoration of regional peace and stability,



especially President Xi Jinping's Four-Point Proposal and the Pakistan-China Five-Point Initiative.

Both leaders underscored the importance of imple-

menting the understandings reached between the parties and maintaining continued engagement for the peaceful settlement of all outstanding issues. They noted the impor-

tance of opening of the Strait of Hormuz for the global economy, energy security, and international trade.

The two sides also discussed the recent successful visit of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to China and agreed to continue with robust follow-up and implementation of its outcomes.

DPM/FM emphasized the importance of working together for CPEC 2.0 and further strengthening bilateral economic and investment cooperation.

Both sides agreed to remain in close contact and continue consultations on key bilateral and regional matters of common interest.



City Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet, chaired by the Finance Minister, convened to approve several financial

summaries. Key approvals included a Rs. 2,192.8 million Technical Supplementary Grant (TSG) for the NADRA-TDP-ERP/KP-CCSDP project, funded by the World Bank, to maintain operations. The ECC also sanctioned

Finance Minister Chairs ECC, Approves Key TSGs

a Rs. 5 billion TSG for the Directorate General Immigration and Passports to clear arrears for passport booklet printing and ensure continuous services. Furthermore, Rs. 2,124.2 million was allocated via TSG for three Interior Division development projects: the Model Prison at H-16, Islamabad, the National Police Hospital, and the Foreign National Security Cell Dashboard.

A TSG of Rs. 240.5 million was also approved for the Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) for helicopter repairs. The ECC further authorized the continuation of gas supply arrangements for urea manufacturing plants FatimaFert and Agritech until June 30, 2026, to ensure fertilizer availability and market stability. The meeting was attended by several Federal Ministers and senior government officials.

Pakistan rejects violence in AJK, reaffirms support for Kashmir cause: security sources

News Desk

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's leadership remains committed to resolving issues through dialogue and negotiations while firmly supporting the Kashmiri people's right to self-determination, security sources said during an important briefing on Kashmir and the situation in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK).

Discussing the historical significance of the Kashmir dispute, the security sources described Kashmir as an unfinished part of Pakistan's national narrative and said the issue remained central to the country's foreign and security policy.

They noted that the 1948 war was fought jointly by the Pakistan Army, Kashmiri people and tribal volunteers, adding that five wars had been fought over Kashmir since the crea-



tion of Pakistan.

According to the security sources, slogans such as "Kashmir will become Pakistan" and "We are Pakistanis and

Pakistan is ours" reflected the sentiments shared by many Pakistanis and Kashmiris regarding the disputed territory.

The security sources said economic development projects and subsidies introduced by India in Indian-administered Kashmir could not alter the aspirations of Kashmiris seeking the right to self-determination.

They also alleged that efforts to change the demographic composition of the territory and legal measures introduced by India could not negate the internationally recognised right of self-determination of the Kashmiri people.

The security sources described Indian-administered Kashmir as one of the most heavily militarised regions in the world and claimed that despite political and security pressures, the people of the Kashmir Valley remained united in their political aspirations.

"India does not have a solution to the Kashmir issue," the security sources said.

Prime Minister stresses collective action for land restoration on World Day

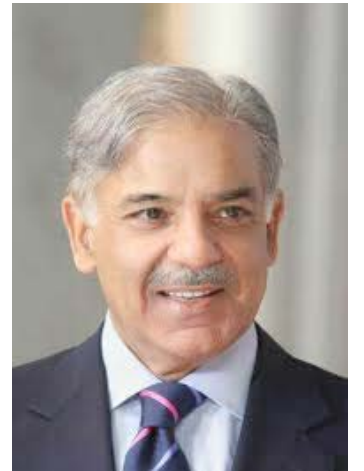
City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to combating land degradation, desertification and drought, stressing collective action to protect natural resources amid growing climate challenges.

In his message on World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought, themed "Rangelands: Recognize. Respect. Restore", the PM said Pakistan joins the world in renewing resolve for sustainable land management. He highlighted rangelands' role in food security, biodiversity, climate resilience, water management and rural livelihoods.

Noting Pakistan's vulnerability to rising temperatures, prolonged dry spells, water scarcity and land degradation, he warned these threaten agricultural productivity and food security. The government, he said, is addressing them through land restoration, sustainable rangeland management, afforestation, ecosystem restoration, drought mitigation and community participation.

Shehbaz highlighted the federal "Zarkhaiz Scheme" to modernize agriculture, providing interest-free loans and machinery subsidies to



millions of small farmers to improve land productivity through sustainable practices.

He urged federal and provincial governments, institutions, academia, civil society, private sector and communities to intensify collaboration for land protection and restoration. Through afforestation and collective action, Pakistan can strengthen climate resilience and secure a prosperous future, he concluded, urging stakeholders to safeguard fertile lands, forests and rangelands.

Islamic New Year: PM Shehbaz Prays for Peace, Prosperity Worldwide

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif extended greetings for the Islamic New Year 1448 Hijri, wishing for global peace, prosperity, and stability. He highlighted the significance of Hijrah as a foundation for an exemplary society based on Islamic principles and invoked the lessons of brotherhood, justice, and sacrifice.

The PM also commemorated the sacrifices of Hazrat Imam Hussain

(RA) and his companions, emphasizing their courage against oppression.

Reaffirming Pakistan's commitment, he called for unwavering support for oppressed Muslims, especially in Palestine and Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir. He urged citizens to uphold honesty, hard work, and national unity for Pakistan's development and prayed for blessings on the nation and the world.

Muqam urges extension of tax exemptions in former FATA, PATA regions



City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan Engineer Amir Muqam Tuesday called for the continuation of tax exemptions in the former Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and Provincially Administered Tribal Areas (PATA), emphasizing that the regions continue to face economic challenges due to years of conflict and

displacement.

Speaking during the budget debate in the National Assembly, the minister said the federal government had made consistent efforts to implement commitments made with the Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) government and stressed the importance of sustained dialogue between federal and regional stakeholders to ensure governance and economic stability.

Four independent GB election winners join IPP



Bureau Report

ISLAMABAD: Four independent candidates who won seats in the Gilgit-Baltistan Assembly elections have joined the Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party (IPP).

The announcement was made during a meeting with Aleem Khan. The lawmakers joining the party include Muhammad Dilpazir from GBA-15 Diamer, Aman Ali from

GBA-21 Ghizer-3, Anwar Ali from GBA-23 Ghanche and Asad Shafiq from GBA-24 Ghanche-3.

Speaking on the occasion, Muhammad Dilpazir said the four successful independent candidates had formed a group and collectively decided to join the IPP. He added that they were also in contact with other independent members as well as candidates belonging to the Majlis Wahdat-e-Muslimeen (MWM).