



Daily The Spokesman

A Leading National Daily



فرمان رسول ﷺ

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Barkat Rice Mills (Pvt) Limited



Rana Sana says government engaging IMF on FATA, PATA tax issues

Prime Minister's Adviser on Political and Public Affairs Rana Sanaullah said on Friday that the government was engaging with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to address tax-related concerns in FATA and PATA and remained open to political dialogue with the opposition.



Pakistan issues visas to Indian pilgrims on death anniversary of Maharaja Ranjit Singh

On the occasion of the death anniversary of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the Pakistan High Commission in New Delhi has issued 438 visas to pilgrims from India to attend commemorative events scheduled to be held in Pakistan from 21-30 June 2026.

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PM addresses budget session

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif addresses budget session of National Assembly on Friday.



Photo: PID

Petrol price cut by Rs74, diesel by Rs67 as PM announces relief package

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday announced a major reduction in petroleum prices, cutting petrol by Rs74 per litre and diesel by Rs67 per litre, following a decline in global oil prices and improved regional economic conditions. The new prices bring petrol down from Rs373 to Rs299 per litre and diesel from Rs378 to Rs311 per litre, providing significant relief to consumers.

The prime minister said the government had fulfilled its commitment to pass on the full benefit of lower international oil prices to the public. He noted that Rs129 billion, generated through development savings and austerity measures, had been used to cushion the impact of rising



fuel costs during the crisis.

Shehbaz Sharif said Pakistan avoided an energy crisis through timely planning, ensuring uninterrupted fuel supplies despite regional challenges. He thanked provincial governments for their cooperation and reaffirmed the government's commitment to controlling inflation and maintaining economic stability. He also credited Pakistan's diplomatic efforts for promoting peace in the Middle East and acknowledged the contributions of Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, senior ministers and the economic team.

Pakistan, Iran to enter new era of prosperity after Islamabad MoU: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday welcomed the signing of the Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Iran and the United States, expressing confidence that it would pave the way for a new era of peace, prosperity, stronger bilateral ties and enhanced economic cooperation in the

region. Addressing the National Assembly, the prime minister said Pakistan had gained international recognition for its role in facilitating the peace agreement, describing it as a proud moment that reflected the country's growing diplomatic influence on the global stage.

Shehbaz Sharif commended Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir for his significant contribution

to regional peace efforts and also appreciated the roles of Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar and Interior Minister Syed Mohsin Naqvi. He urged opposition parties to join the government in promoting national unity, stressing that the diplomatic success belonged to the entire nation.

The prime minister informed the House that Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian had called

him to thank Pakistan and its people for their support during a difficult period.

Shehbaz Sharif invited the Iranian president to visit Pakistan, assuring him of a warm welcome, while confirming that a Pakistani delegation would attend the funeral prayers of Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

Expressing optimism that the ceasefire would strengthen

regional stability and improve economic conditions, the prime minister noted that international oil prices had fallen following the agreement.

He announced that the government would introduce reduced petroleum prices later in the day and thanked provincial governments, as well as Iran, the United States, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Türkiye and China, for supporting the peace initiative.

Around 3.5 mln shopkeepers to be brought into tax net: Bilal Kayani

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Finance and Revenue Bilal Azhar Kayani told the National Assembly that around 3.5 million shopkeepers will be brought into the tax net in fiscal year 2026-27. Speaking on the federal budget 2026-27, he called it a "people-friendly" document focused on economic stability and inclusive growth. He congratulated Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, and the finance team for improving



Pakistan's global standing, Kayani said when the government took office in February 2024 the economy

was unstable, but stability was achieved with lower inflation, higher forex reserves, and successful completion of the IMF programme. All fiscal targets for FY2025 were met without a supplementary budget.

For relief, tax rates for salaried individuals were cut across brackets: 23% to 20% for Rs2.2-2.3m income, 30% to 25% for Rs3.2-4.1m, 35% to 29% for Rs4.1-5.6m, and 35% to 32% for Rs5.6-7m. Super tax was abolished. Exporters got tax relief, IT incentives

were extended 3 years, and Rs300bn was allocated for agriculture plus Rs110bn for the PM's Agriculture Youth Initiative. Customs duty on farm machinery was removed and sales tax exemptions given on women's essentials and family planning items.

To expand the tax base, shopkeepers with sales up to Rs20m annually will pay 1% tax via a simple Urdu form and get a green FBR plate with limited audits. Kayani thanked business groups for supporting the measures.

Dr Musadik Malik Declares Water Crisis a Matter of Justice, Not Scarcity

News Desk

BRUSSELS: Federal Minister for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination Dr Musadik Malik on Friday said the global water crisis was fundamentally an issue of justice rather than scarcity, arguing that vulnerable communities increasingly suffer due to climate change and upstream control of transboundary rivers.

Addressing a seminar on transboundary water resources organised by the Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS) and the Embassy of Pakistan in Brussels, the minister said millions of people face floods, droughts and uncertainty because decisions affecting water flows are often made beyond their control. He illustrated the human cost by recounting the repeated displacement of a Pakistani farmer whose

livelihood was destroyed by successive floods and droughts.

Dr Malik said Pakistan contributes less than one per cent of global carbon emissions yet remains among the countries most vulnerable to climate change. He highlighted the country's heavy human and economic losses, including thousands of deaths, injuries and disrupted education.



DPM/FM Dar urges rule-based water governance, warns against using water as tool of coercion

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar has reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to treaty-based transboundary water governance, stressing that water must never be used as an instrument of coercion and calling for enhanced international cooperation to address growing water security challenges.

In a video-recorded keynote address delivered at a seminar titled "Transboundary Water Resources: A Weaponised Global Common" in Brussels on Thursday, Ishaq Dar underscored the importance of respecting international law, upholding multilateral cooperation, and ensuring the peaceful management of shared water resources.

The seminar was organized by the Embassy of Pakistan in Brussels in collaboration with the Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS), according to a press release received here on Friday.

Addressing the gathering, Ambassador of Pakistan to Belgium, Luxembourg, and



the European Union Rahim Hayat Qureshi said that transboundary water resources are critical to regional stability, global security, and sustainable development. He reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to the peaceful resolution of disputes through dialogue and established legal mechanisms.

The event brought together prominent policymakers, researchers, legal experts, academics, and practitioners, including Federal Minister Senator Dr. Musadik Masood Malik, Policy Officer at Water Europe Madalena Cepeda, Senior Researcher at Utrecht University Cathy Suykens, international arbitration expert Feisal Hussain Naqvi, Head of Climate Programme at CEPS Isabel Scheckenbach, and Founder of Captiv8 Strategies and Editor of The Pakistan Playbook Danish Qayyum.

MoIB Fact Checker rejects Taliban claims, says drone shot down after entering Pakistan airspace

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting's Fact Checker on Friday dismissed claims by the Afghan Taliban regime that it had carried out drone strikes on alleged Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP) camps in the border areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, calling the assertions false.

According to the Fact Checker, terrorist groups, including Daesh and more than two dozen other organisations, continue to operate

from areas under the control of the Afghan Taliban regime. It alleged that such claims were aimed at concealing the regime's support for terrorist activities affecting neighbouring countries and the wider region.

The Fact Checker further stated that a rudimentary Taliban drone entered Pakistan's airspace near Shinko in Khyber, where it was promptly detected and neutralised by the Pakistan Air Force's air defence system. It added that photographic evidence of the destroyed drone had also been released.

Safe City Cameras to Monitor Processions as Punjab Government Prioritizes Muharram Peace

Bureau Report

LAHORE: A high-level meeting of the Cabinet Committee for Faisalabad Division was held on June 19 under the direction of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif. The meeting reviewed security, law and order, traffic management, and public facilitation arrangements for the first ten days of Muharram.

Ministers Azma Bokhari, Bilal Akbar Khan, and Special Assistant Zeeshan Malik attended, later visiting the Central Imambargah and procession routes. The Faisalabad Commissioner and RPO briefed the committee on the comprehensive security plan being implemented.



Information Minister Azma Bokhari instructed Deputy Commissioners and District Police Officers to coordinate with procession organizers and ensure

strict adherence to timings. She directed that security at sensitive locations be strengthened to prevent incidents.

Authorities were asked to ensure uninterrupted electricity, cold drinking water, and fans for participants. Muharram Control Rooms must operate round the clock to address complaints promptly.

Bokhari also instructed officials to promote the Panic Button Application via QR codes at Imambargahs for emergency responses. Procession routes should be regularly sprinkled with water due to intense heat.

A Quick Response Force has been deployed to monitor fake news and sectarian propaganda on social media, working with law enforcement.

AJK Police Denies False Rumors of Arrests for Long March Protesters

Bureau Report

MUZAFFARABAD: The Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Police on Friday rejected rumours circulating on social media that participants of the Joint Public Action Committee's (JPAC) long march would be arrested or harmed if they decided to leave the protest and return home.

According to the AJK Police spokesperson, several young people from Bhimber, Mirpur and other parts of Azad Kashmir, who joined the long march called by the Joint Public Action Committee on June 9, 2026, have expressed a desire to leave the protest and return to their families.

The spokesperson said misleading rumours were being spread by elements associated with the banned Joint Public Action Committee, claiming that those attempting to leave the protest would be arrested or shot by police or Rangers. He categorically rejected these claims, describing them as completely false, baseless and intended to create fear among the participants.

He said many youths from Bhimber, Mirpur and other districts, currently present in Rawalakot, were eager to return to their homes.

To facilitate their safe return, the AJK Police has established facilitation centres in Rawalakot where those wishing to leave the protest can seek assistance. The spokesperson assured that the police would provide all necessary support to ensure their safe and peaceful return to their respective hometowns.



Kashmir Committee chair urges Federal and AJK Governments to end Azad Kashmir Crisis

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister and Chairman Parliamentary Committee for Kashmir Rana Muhammad Qasim Noon met a delegation of Jammu and Kashmir Community International (JKCI) at Parliament House, Islamabad. The federation was led by Jammu and Kashmir Community International Ghulam Nabi Butt.

General Secretary Raja Pervez Ahmad Khan, Executive Member Sardar Muhammad Iqbal Yousuf, Chief Organizer Europe Samina Naz Gul, Executive Member Muhammad Saeed Khan, Vice Chairman Muhammad Zarin Khan, Joint Secretary General Secretary Yousad Attal Chaudhry Muhammad Shakeel, executive member Professor Khawaja Farooq



Ahmed, executive member Sajida Gilani, executive member Mushtaq Ahmad Pirzadeh, Lal Hussain were among them.

Expressing deep concern over the recent developments in Azad Kashmir, Chairman Parliamentary Committee on Rana of Kashmir Muhammad Qasim Nunn expressed his deep concern and requested the federal government and the government of Azad Kashmir to work together to resolve the problem. Wafd stressed that the Action Committee should open the door for negotiations so that the chaos in Azad Kashmir can end and the Sikh people there can breathe a sigh of relief.

During the meeting, the sides discussed the current situation in occupied Jammu and Kashmir, the problems facing the Kashmiri people, human rights violations and the problem of effectively highlighting Kashmir at the global level.

Veteran Kashmiri Activist Abdul Hameed Lone Joins Muslim Conference in Rawalpindi



City Desk

RAWALPINDI: Prominent Kashmiri political and social activist Abdul Hameed Lone has joined the All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference during a meeting in Rawalpindi. Lone, who hails from Indian-administered Kashmir, has long been associated with the Kashmir movement and previously served as a leader of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference and President of its Azad Kashmir chapter. He has also remained active in political, social and public welfare activities and has represented the Kashmir cause at national and international forums.

Welcoming him into the party, All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference President and former Azad Kashmir Prime Minister Sardar Attique Ahmad Khan said Lone's inclusion would further strengthen the party. Addressing the gathering, Abdul Hameed Lone reaffirmed his commitment to the Muslim Conference's ideology, the protection of the rights of the people of Jammu and Kashmir, and support for Pakistan. Party leaders and workers attending the meeting also pledged to continue their struggle for the rights of the Kashmiri people and the Kashmir cause.

Budget 2026-27 Fails the Middle Class, Warns PPPW Amid Calls for Tax Reform and Debt Relief

Asim Tanveer

MULTAN: The Pakistan Peoples Party Workers (PPPW), led by Senator Dr. Safdar Ali Abbasi and including Ms. Naheed Khan, Fayyaz Ali Khan, Advocate Amjad Ali Baloch, and others, has strongly rejected the Federal Budget 2026-27.

They criticize it as an IMF-driven, anti-people budget that fails to address Pakistan's increasing hardships, such as inflation, unemployment, high utility costs, and declining purchasing power. The burden of economic adjustment unfairly falls on salaried employees, pensioners, laborers, farmers, and the middle class, while the wealthy remain outside the tax net.

The party is concerned about the rising national debt, which diverts funds from education, healthcare, employment, research, and social



welfare. The budget lacks a strategy for broadening the tax base, documenting the economy, or reducing external

borrowing. PPPW also notes inadequate allocations for education, healthcare, youth development, entrepreneurship, and social welfare, as well as a missing plan for climate change, water scarcity, and disaster preparedness. PPPW emphasizes that economic recovery requires political stability, democratic engagement, and national consensus.

They call for the release of all political prisoners, including former Prime Minister Imran Khan, and urge dialogue within the Constitution. Reaffirming the vision of Bhutto, the party supports social justice, democratic freedoms, constitutional supremacy, and economic self-reliance.

They view the budget as a missed opportunity for relief and human development, pledging to advocate for policies prioritizing citizen welfare over all else.

PCCR Convener Dr. Nikhat Shakil Calls for Higher Tobacco Taxes in Budget Speech

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Dr. Nikhat Shakil, Convener of the Parliamentary Caucus on Child Rights (PCCR), urged the government to significantly raise taxes on tobacco products, citing severe health and social impacts in Pakistan. During a budget session, she questioned why tobacco was exempted from additional taxation despite increases on other goods, noting no rise in Federal Excise Duty since 2023.

She called tobacco a non-essential, harmful product that should be heavily taxed. Dr. Shakil highlighted that tobacco causes about 160,000 deaths annually (438 daily), calling it a public health crisis that burdens families and healthcare. She expressed alarm over 1,200 children starting smoking daily, urging stronger controls to protect youth from nicotine addiction. Citing international evidence, she argued that higher taxes effectively reduce consumption, especially among young people, saving lives and generating revenue for health and social development. The PCCR has consistently advocated for such policies to safeguard children's health and future.



Not a province, but a strong Union Council is the need of the time

Every time Pakistan faces a major economic crisis, new political debates emerge that shift public attention away from real issues. In August 2023, when expensive electricity and skyrocketing utility bills had severely burdened the public, the demand for a Saraiki province and a South Punjab province once again became the center of political discussion. Today, during the budget cycle of 2025-26, the same voices are resurfacing. The question is: is the division of Punjab truly the solution to public problems, or are we simply diverting attention from the real issue?

First, it is important to understand that development around the world is not determined by the size of administrative units but by the quality of governance. In neighboring India, Uttar Pradesh has a population of around 240 million, Bihar around 130 million, Maharashtra also around

130 million, and West Bengal more than 100 million. All these states are larger than Pakistan's Punjab in terms of population, yet governance functions effectively through local governments, panchayats, and municipal institutions that decentralize resources and authority to the grassroots level. Despite large administrative units, development continues because power is distributed downward.

The real issue, therefore, is not the size of provinces but the distribution of authority.

Punjab's current fiscal budget exceeds 5,131 billion rupees. Would fair distribution of this budget truly be achieved simply by dividing the province? Even if a separate South Punjab province were created today, but authority remained concentrated in a few cities, families, or offices, what meaningful change would the common citizen actually experience? Unfortunately, our political culture

has trained citizens to seek "recommendations" rather than rights. Recommendations for encroachments, recommendations for land grabbers, recommendations for illegal constructions, recommendations for transfers, and recommendations for routine government work. Citizens are rarely educated about what legal rights they actually possess or how they can hold elected institutions accountable.

Article 140-A of the Constitution of Pakistan clearly obliges provinces to devolve political, administrative, and financial authority to local governments.

Article 140-A(1) states that: "Each province shall, by law, establish a local government system and devolve political, administrative, and finan-

cial responsibility and authority to the elected representatives of the local governments."

In line with this constitutional requirement, Punjab has enacted the "Punjab Local Government Act 2025," which designates the Union Council as the basic unit of local government. Under Section 27 of the law, Union Councils are empowered with responsibilities such as registration of births, deaths, marriages and divorces, approval of local budgets, imposition of local taxes, and various administrative functions at the grassroots level. Furthermore, Section 15 recognizes Union Councils as the fundamental unit of local democracy, while Sections 8 and 9 provide for their delimitation and representa-

tion framework. The Supreme Court of Pakistan, in multiple judgments, has held that local governments are an essential component of democracy, and provincial governments are constitutionally bound under Article 140-A to ensure their effective functioning.

This raises an important question: if the Union Council is the closest institution to the people, why does political discourse rarely emphasize its revival and strengthening? We frequently discuss the creation of new provinces, but seldom talk about real devolution of power to the grassroots level.

Recently, a report published in Daily Khabrain Multan regarding the transfer of District Council Multan funds prompted Punjab Public Accounts Committee Chairman Syed Ali Haider Gillani to present a resolution in the Punjab Assembly. This is a positive example showing that if elected representatives prioritize

protecting the resources and rights of local institutions, public issues can be addressed more effectively.

Pakistan's problems do not require more political slogans; they require strong local governments. If Union Councils are functional, Tehsil Councils empowered, and local budgets are spent by local representatives, citizens would no longer need to look toward Lahore or Islamabad for every small neighborhood issue.

Therefore, the demand of the time is that alongside the debate on the division of Punjab—and even more urgently than that—we must prioritize the real revival of Union Councils, financial autonomy of local bodies, and full implementation of Article 140-A. Because a strong Union Council is the foundation of a strong district, a strong province, and ultimately a strong Pakistan. So, Punjab Debate or Governance Reform? The Real Solution to Pakistan's Administrative Crisis



Analysis

Zain-ul-Abideen Abid



Educational exchange key to stronger bilateral relations

Malaysian High Commissioner at USP

By Naveed Ahmed Khan / Asim Tanveer

MULTAN: Emphasizing the transformative role of education in fostering international understanding and cooperation, the High Commissioner of Malaysia to Pakistan, His Excellency Amb. Dato' Mohamad Azhar Mazlan, called for enhanced educational collaboration and greater student exchange opportunities between Pakistan and Malaysia during his visit to the University of Southern Punjab (USP), Multan.

The visit underscored the deepening academic relationship between the two friendly countries and highlighted the importance of people-to-people connections through education, cultural engagement, and institutional partnerships. It also reflected the shared commitment of Pakistan and Malaysia to strengthening cooperation in higher education, research, and academic mobility.

The Malaysian envoy received a warm welcome upon his arrival at the university. Chairman Board of Governors USP, Mr. Asim Nazir Ahmad, and Rector USP, Prof. Dr. Muhammad Mukhtar, greeted the distinguished guest. The reception was also attended by Director General USP Mr. Saqib Nazir Ahmad, Director Finance Mr. Yasir Nazir Ahmad, Director QEC Dr. Syed Farhan Gillani, Deputy Director Chairman Secretariat Mr. Rana Abid Hussain, members of the university's senior management, faculty members, students, and prominent journalist and Editor Daily The Spokesman Mr. Naveed Ahmed Khan.

The formal ceremony began with a welcome address by Rector Prof. Dr. Muhammad Mukhtar, who expressed his appreciation for the High Commissioner's visit and highlighted the significance of academic engagement between institutions of the two countries.

Addressing a large gathering of students, faculty members, and university officials, High Commissioner His Excellency Amb. Dato' Azhar Mazlan reflected on the longstanding educational ties between Pakistan and Malaysia. He noted that in earlier decades, Malaysian students frequently travelled to Pakistan to pursue higher education and professional studies, contributing to strong educational linkages between the two nations.

He observed that educational trends have evolved significantly over time, with Malaysia now emerging as a preferred destination for thousands of Pakistani students seeking quality higher education.

"Today, thousands of Pakistani students are pursuing their education in Malaysia, which reflects the confidence that Pakistani families and students have in Malaysian educational institutions," he remarked.

The High Commissioner emphasized that while this growing trend is encouraging, educational collaboration should be mutually beneficial. He stressed the need to create opportunities for more Malaysian students to study in Pakistan, enabling them to experience the country's academic environment, cultural heritage, and social diversity.

According to the envoy, educational exchanges extend far beyond classroom learning. Such programs expose students to new cultures, traditions, languages, and perspectives, helping to build lasting friendships and stronger international understanding.

"Education serves as one of the strongest bridges between nations. When students study abroad, they not only gain knowledge but also learn about the culture, traditions, and perspectives of other societies. Such experiences contribute to long-term understanding and cooperation between countries," he said.

The High Commissioner encouraged educational institutions in both countries to work closely together to facilitate greater student mobility, collaborative research, faculty exchanges, and academic partnerships that can benefit future generations.

The event also provided an opportunity to celebrate the success stories of individuals whose academic journeys have strengthened links between Pakistan and Malaysia. Rector Prof. Dr. Muhammad Mukhtar shared his personal connection with Malaysia, revealing that he had completed his own education there. He highlighted how his academic experience in Malaysian institutions had played a significant



role in shaping his professional career and leadership in higher education.

The Rector further introduced five faculty members currently serving at USP who had also graduated from Malaysian universities. Their achievements, he noted, stand as a testament to the positive impact of international education and the enduring value of academic cooperation between the two countries.

Adding a personal dimension to the event, Malaysian alumni associated with the university shared their experiences of studying in Malaysia. They spoke about the academic excellence, multicultural environment, and professional opportunities they encountered during their educational journeys. The alumni emphasized the importance of investing in education as a catalyst for sustainable development, innovation, and international cooperation.

During the discussions, participants explored a wide range of opportunities for expanding bilateral cooperation in higher education. Topics included joint research initiatives, faculty development programs, institutional partnerships, student exchange schemes, and collaborative academic projects. The conversations reflected a shared vision for building stronger educational networks that can contribute to regional and global knowledge development.

A major highlight of the visit was the inauguration of the University of Southern Punjab's School of Fashion Designing by the Malaysian High Commissioner. During the inauguration ceremony, the envoy took keen interest in the hand-made products and creative works displayed by students. He praised the talent, creativity, and craftsmanship demonstrated by the young designers and encouraged the university to continue fostering innovation, entrepreneurship, and practical learning opportunities.

The High Commissioner also undertook a comprehensive tour of the university campus, visiting academic departments, laboratories, learning facilities, and student activity centers. University officials briefed him on ongoing academic programs, research projects, institutional achievements, and future development plans aimed at enhancing educational quality and student outcomes.

Expressing his admiration for the institution, the Malaysian High Commissioner commended the University of Southern Punjab for its contribution to higher education in Pakistan. He acknowledged the important role played by private-sector universities in expanding access to education and supporting national development through human capital formation.

The envoy praised the university's efforts to provide quality education and modern learning facilities, describing the institution as a valuable contributor to Pakistan's educational landscape. He also appreciated its commitment to preparing students for the challenges and opportunities of an increasingly interconnected and rapidly evolving world.

The ceremony concluded with Chairman Board of Governors Mr. Asim Nazir Ahmad delivering the vote of thanks. He expressed sincere gratitude to the Malaysian High Commissioner for visiting the university and engaging with students, faculty members, and university leadership.

Chairman Asim Nazir Ahmad reaffirmed USP's commitment to strengthening educational partnerships with Malaysian institutions and expanding avenues for academic cooperation. He said the university looks forward to organizing

future collaborative programs, exchange initiatives, and joint academic activities that will further deepen educational and cultural ties between Pakistan and Malaysia.

He noted that such engagements create valuable opportunities for students, researchers, and educators while contributing to greater mutual understanding and friendship between the two nations.

The visit of the Malaysian High Commissioner was widely regarded as a significant milestone in advancing academic cooperation between Pakistan and Malaysia. Through meaningful discussions on student mobility, educational partnerships, cultural exchange, research collaboration, and institutional engagement, the event reinforced the shared commitment of both countries to building stronger educational bridges and creating new opportunities for future generations.

The visit also highlighted how higher education continues to serve as a powerful platform for strengthening bilateral relations, promoting cultural understanding, and fostering long-term cooperation between Pakistan and Malaysia—two countries united by friendship, mutual respect, and a common commitment to educational excellence.

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Trump Turns Turtle

Politics is full of surprises, but few developments in recent history have been as dramatic as the transformation of President Donald Trump's position on Iran. Only months ago, Washington's rhetoric revolved around maximum pressure, overwhelming force, and the language of unconditional surrender. Iran was portrayed as an adversary that could be subdued through military power and economic strangulation.

Today, the same president is defending a peace agreement with Iran, advocating reconstruction, supporting the return of frozen Iranian assets, criticizing aspects of Israeli military conduct in Lebanon, and warning against actions that could derail the ceasefire he now champions.

The question is obvious: What changed?

How did a leader who once spoke of destroying Iran's military capabilities become the chief defender of an agreement designed to reintegrate Iran into regional stability? How did the United States move from threats of escalation to discussions of reconstruction and diplomacy? The answer lies in the collision between ideology and reality.

At the outset of the conflict, many in Washington appeared convinced that overwhelming military pressure would quickly force Tehran into submission. Yet as the confrontation unfolded, it became increasingly clear that military victories do not automatically translate into strategic success.

President Trump himself provided clues to this transformation during his remarks at the G7 Summit. Defending

the agreement, he openly acknowledged that continuing the war would have imposed catastrophic economic costs on the world economy.

"If we didn't do this deal," Trump declared, "we could have dropped more bombs for another three weeks, two years, whatever. But you would never have the Strait of Hormuz open. Your market would go down at levels nobody had ever seen before." This statement reveals the first and perhaps most important reason for Washington's change of course: economics.

The prospect of prolonged conflict threatened global energy markets, international trade routes, and investor confidence. Every discussion of peace pushed markets higher. Every hint of escalation drove uncertainty into global commerce. Trump himself repeatedly noted that financial markets reacted positively whenever negotiations appeared likely to succeed. For a president who closely associates economic performance with political success, the message from the markets was impossible to ignore.

The second factor was geopolitical reality. The United States is not Israel. Israel's strategic focus is naturally centered on its immediate neighborhood. The United States, however, is a global superpower whose interests span every continent. Washington must maintain relationships with Europe, Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Muslim world simultaneously.

As the conflict expanded, American policymakers increasingly recognized that unlimited support for military escalation carried substantial diplomatic costs. Relations with Gulf states, broader Muslim-majority countries, and important global partners risked deterioration.

This broader perspective became increasingly evident in Trump's remarks. Speaking about Lebanon, he departed sharply from traditional rhetoric. "I feel very bad for Lebanon," Trump said. "It was a great culture. It was an incredible culture. For the last 50 or 60 years they have been living in hell."

Even more strikingly, he publicly criticized the Israeli approach to Hezbollah, arguing that "when two drones are shot into the desert and dropped harmlessly, you don't have to knock down buildings in Beirut." Such comments would have been almost unimaginable from an American president at the beginning of the conflict.

The third factor was the realization that economic warfare and military operations have limits. Trump repeatedly emphasized that the objective of preventing nuclear proliferation had been achieved. He argued that Israel's greatest security concern was the possibility of an Iranian nuclear weapon. His message to Israeli critics was simple: the agreement delivers exactly what Israel has always claimed to want.

Vice President JD Vance reinforced this position even more bluntly.

Responding to criticism from members of the Israeli cabinet, Vance stated: "Donald J. Trump is the only head of state in the entire world who is sympathetic to the nation of Israel at this moment in time." He added a pointed reminder: "Two-thirds of the defensive weapons that have protected Israel have been built by American hands and paid for by American tax dollars."

Most remarkably, Vance challenged the assumption that military force alone could solve every security challenge. "You can't just kill your way out of solving every single national security problem that you have," he said. Those words represent a profound shift in tone from Washington.

For decades, American officials often defended Israeli military actions without publicly questioning the underlying strategy. Vance's comments suggest growing frustration within the administration regarding what it perceives as the absence of a long-term political solution.

A fourth factor was military sustainability. Wars consume resources at extraordinary rates. Ammunition stockpiles, advanced weapons systems, naval deployments, and logistical support all impose enormous burdens on national budgets. Trump himself highlighted the staggering financial cost of continued operations, noting that hundreds of millions of dollars were being spent in a matter of days. Even the world's strongest military cannot wage unlimited campaigns without consequences.

The fifth factor was the fear of global economic disruption. Trump repeatedly argued that keeping the Strait of Hormuz

Continued on Page 7



Analysis

Qamar Bashir

World Refugees Day

On the occasion of World Refugee Day, Pakistan joined the international community in expressing solidarity with refugees worldwide, paying tribute to their resilience, courage and determination. This year's theme, "Until Everyone is Safe," highlights that safety is a fundamental human right and emphasizes the shared responsibility of the international community to protect and support people displaced by conflict, violence and other crises.

For Pakistan, supporting refugees is not simply a symbolic gesture observed on a single day but a humanitarian commitment demonstrated over nearly five decades. Following the conflict in Afghanistan in 1979, millions of Afghan refugees crossed into Pakistan seeking safety. Despite facing its own economic and developmental challenges, Pakistan opened its borders and provided shelter, protection and humanitarian assistance to Afghan families for generations.

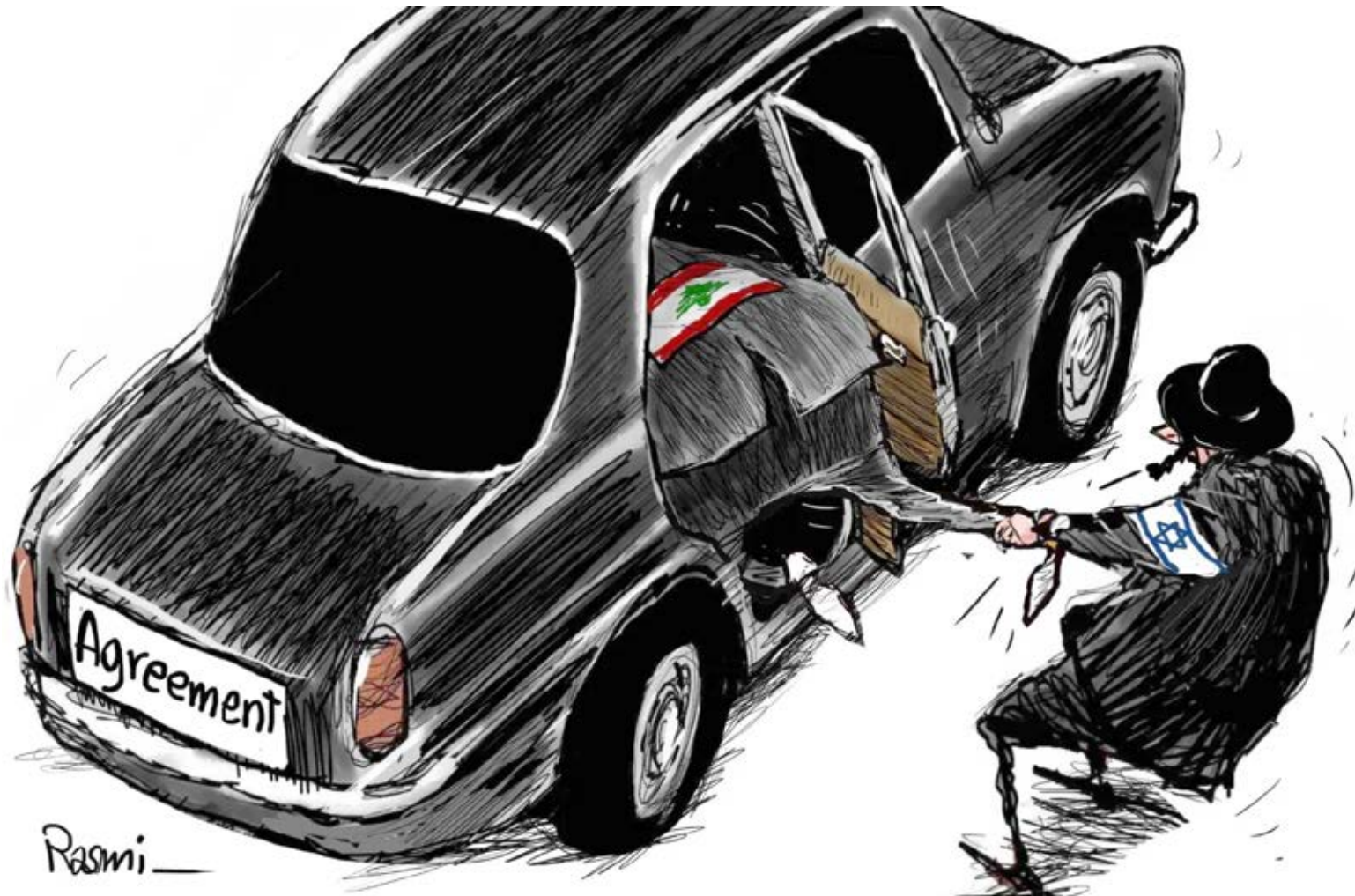
Over the past four decades, Pakistan has remained one of the world's largest refugee-hosting countries. Refugee settlements and camps were established across the country, while Afghan refugees were provided access to education, healthcare, employment opportunities and other essential services. These efforts reflected Pakistan's longstanding tradition of hospitality and humanitarian responsibility despite the significant pressure placed on its limited national resources.

Pakistan also managed the movement and welfare of millions of Afghan nationals while working closely with international partners. Since September 2023, the government has implemented a phased, orderly and dignified repatriation programme. By June 2026, more than 2.4 million Afghan nationals had returned to Afghanistan. These returns represent not only a major logistical achievement but also the stories of millions of people who found safety and support in Pakistan during some of the most difficult periods of their lives.

The statement also acknowledges that hosting millions of refugees has imposed considerable economic, social, environmental and security challenges on Pakistan. It stresses that countries hosting refugees should receive greater recognition and support from the international community, as refugee protection and repatriation are shared global responsibilities.

Pakistan reaffirmed that a peaceful, stable and economically prosperous Afghanistan is essential for ensuring the safe, voluntary and sustainable return of Afghan refugees. The country also appreciated the continued cooperation of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other international partners in addressing refugee-related challenges.

Finally, Pakistan paid tribute to its citizens for their compassion, generosity and hospitality in sharing their homes, schools and healthcare facilities with refugees over the decades. The statement concluded by urging the international community to renew its commitment to ensuring that displaced and stateless people can one day return home safely, with dignity, hope and lasting peace.



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

Pakistan's Diplomatic Moment and the Challenges Ahead

The peace agreement between the United States and Iran represents an unprecedented development for global peace, prosperity, and stability. While the agreement has significant implications for the political landscape of the Middle East, considerable uncertainty regarding the region's future is likely to remain.

Pakistan maintains that it demonstrated notable diplomatic skill by helping facilitate the agreement between Washington and Tehran, bringing an end to weeks of hostilities. The question, therefore, is how Pakistan achieved this diplomatic success despite numerous political and diplomatic challenges.

Historically, this is not the first time Pakistan has played a mediating role. In 1971, Pakistan facilitated the secret diplomatic contacts that paved the way for the rapprochement between the United States and China. Pakistan also contributed to diplomatic efforts surrounding the Geneva Accords, which led to the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan. In 2014, Pakistan successfully secured the European Union's Generalised Scheme of Preferences Plus (GSP+) status. The establishment of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) further strengthened Pakistan's strategic partnership with China. Later, Pakistan facilitated negotiations between the United States and the Afghan Taliban, culminating in the Doha Agreement and the withdrawal of American forces from Afghanistan.

Against this backdrop, the U. S.-Iran agreement is being viewed by Pakistani officials as another important diplomatic achievement. Islamabad hopes that any easing of sanctions on Iran by the United States and its Western allies would strengthen bilateral economic and political relations between Pakistan and Iran.

According to the Pakistani government, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir played important roles in maintaining diplomatic engagement with both Washington and Tehran. Officials argue that Pakistan's efforts helped reduce the risk of a wider regional conflict.

During the crisis, Pakistan also remained in close contact with the leadership of Saudi Arabia, Türkiye, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Qatar and other Muslim countries, reflecting Islamabad's broader objective of promoting regional stability and preventing further escalation.

Meanwhile, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu continues to advocate policies aimed at limiting Iran's regional influence and military capabilities. Many analysts believe Israel seeks to reshape the strategic balance in the Middle East, while Iran remains a central player in what it describes as the "Axis of Resistance."

Pakistan's leadership believes that instability in Iran could have serious consequences for regional security, including Pakistan's own national interests. Given Pakistan's more than 900-kilometre border with Iran, maintaining peaceful and stable relations with Tehran remains a strategic

necessity. Recent developments have also highlighted shifting power dynamics in the Middle East. Iran continues to exercise significant influence over the Strait of Hormuz, one of the world's most important maritime trade routes through which a substantial share of global energy supplies passes.

Despite the peace agreement, uncertainty persists. The United Arab Emirates has reportedly expanded its defence partnerships while continuing to strengthen strategic cooperation with the United States and Israel. At the same time, Abu Dhabi has deepened relations with India, Greece, Cyprus, Ethiopia and other partners as part of its evolving security strategy.

A key question remains: how durable will the peace agreement between the United States and Iran prove to be? Many observers believe that hard-line elements within the region remain opposed to any long-term accommodation with Iran. Consequently, both Washington and Tehran will need to remain vigilant against attempts to undermine the agreement.

Regional tensions also continue in other areas, particularly Lebanon, underscoring the challenges facing the international community. The ultimate test will be whether the current diplomatic momentum can be sustained and expanded to bring lasting peace and stability to the Middle East.

The agreement between the United States and Iran offers hope. However, decades of mistrust, geopolitical rivalry and competing strategic interests suggest that durable peace will require patience, sustained diplomacy and continued engagement by all stakeholders.

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

Muqaddas Tariq

What Does the Iran-Israel rivalry Conflict indicate About the Formation of a Multiplex World Order?

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-Israel 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

Continued on Page 7

Bull & Bears PSX 100-Share Index Fluctuation

Pakistan: PSX 100-Share Index	
Current	Prev. Close
178,922.75	181,398.21
Day's High	Day's Low
182,185.87	177,836.16
Index Value	Change
41,691,496,206	-2475.46
Percentage	Time
-1.36%	19 Jun, 2026 4:30 pm

Europe: FTSE 100 Index	
Index Value	Change
10,363.27	-36.43
Percentage	Time
-0.35%	19 Jun, 4:35 pm GMT+1

USA: Dow Jones Industrial Average	
Index Value	Change
51,564.70	+72.15
Percentage	Time
+0.14%	18 Jun, 4:45 pm GMT-4

Asia Pacific: Nikkei Stocks Average	
Index Value	Change
71,250.06	+196.57
Percentage	Time
+0.28%	19 Jun, 3:45 pm GMT+9

Open Market Forex Rates

Currency	Buying	Selling
Australian Dollar	192.90	196.75
Bahrain Dinar	737.16	747.75
Canadian Dollar	195.71	200.25
China Yuan	38.10	38.85
Danish Krone	43.35	43.75
Euro	318.12	322.17
Hong Kong Dollar	35.06	36.04
Indian Rupee	2.75	3.05
Japanese Yen	1.7121	1.8104
Kuwaiti Dinar	884.60	894.85
Malaysian Ringgit	67	67.85
New Zealand \$	157.64	161.65
Norwegians Krone	27.97	28.27
Omani Riyal	722	732.25
Qatari Riyal	75.04	75.95
Saudi Riyal	74.25	75
Singapore Dollar	213.90	217.64
Swedish Korona	30.25	30.55
Swiss Franc	342.45	346.20
Thai Bhat	8.50	8.75
U.A.E Dirham	75.95	76.75
UK Pound Sterling	371.49	375.25
US Dollar	279.00	279.30

SAP Reaffirms Commitment to Pakistan's Digital Transformation and AI-Powered Growth

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: During a leadership visit to Pakistan, SAP, a global leader in enterprise applications and Business AI, reaffirmed its commitment to the country's digital transformation and AI-powered economic growth.

The visit featured a meeting between Augusta Spinelli, SAP's Regional President for Europe, Middle East and Africa, and Pakistan's Federal Minister for IT and Telecommunication, Shaza Fatima Khawaja. Discussions centered on Pakistan's digital economy, the role of emerging technologies, and workforce preparation for an AI future.

The Minister appreciated SAP's contributions, highlighting Pakistan's tech-savvy youth, progressive policies, and increasing tech adoption. She emphasized the need for organizations to harness data, cloud, and AI to drive innovation and efficiency, supporting the vision of a future-ready Digital Nation Pakistan.



SAP underscored the importance of solid digital foundations—based on trusted data, integrated processes, and cloud technologies—for realizing AI's full value.

Spinelli noted Pakistan's vibrant market and strong talent base, expressing eagerness to deepen partnerships. Ahmed Al-Faifi, Managing Director of SAP Middle East and Africa - North, stressed that success in the AI economy hinges on transforming data into insights and automating routine tasks.

SAP also sees opportunities to support Pakistan's small and medium businesses through solutions like GROW with SAP, enabling cloud ERP adoption and innovation. Saqib Sabah, SAP's new Head for MEA North Growth Cluster and Managing Director for Pakistan, observed a shift from digitization to intelligent, data-driven operations across sectors. Through its ecosystem, SAP continues to help Pakistani organizations modernize operations, develop digital skills, and create societal impact.

Fire broke out

ISLAMABAD: Men collecting the remaining stuff after fire broke out in a shop allegedly due to short-cut at Jinnah Super Market (F-7 Markaz) in the Federal Capital.



Photo: Online by Sultan Bashir

Gillani Hails Potential Iran-US Deal as a Diplomatic Win for Regional Peace



Kiran Asim

MULTAN: Senate Chairman Syed Yousuf Raza Gillani welcomed the potential Iran-US deal as a positive step for regional peace, stability, and mutual trust. He emphasized that lasting conflict resolution depends

on negotiation, diplomacy, and dialogue, not force. Gillani praised Pakistan's political and military leadership for promoting peace and constructive diplomacy, stating that Pakistan's balanced foreign policy demonstrates that sustainable development and prosperity require peace and cooperation. He appreciated Muslim Ummah leaders for fostering tolerance and understanding to reduce tensions, noting that unity and mutual respect are essential to address challenges. Gillani expressed hope the deal would improve Iran-US relations and create opportunities for regional peace, economic cooperation, and development. He reaffirmed Pakistan's support for measures enhancing global and regional stability.

SECP to Develop Future-Ready Financial Talent Through IFMP

Commerce Desk

KARACHI: The Chairman of the Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP), Dr. Kabir Ahmed Sidhu, emphasized the need to develop a new generation of financial professionals and informed investors to strengthen Pakistan's financial sector, deepen capital markets, and drive sustainable economic growth.

He chaired a meeting on the reform agenda for the Institute of Financial Markets of Pakistan (IFMP), aiming to transform it into a modern, industry-driven institution focused on talent development and financial literacy.

Attendees included SECP Commissioner Muhammad Ali Farid Khwaja, Executive Director Imran Inayat Butt, CEO IFMP Dr. Mubashir Sadiq, and senior officials. Special invitee Shoaib Javed Hussain of State Life Insurance Corporation (SLIC) proposed a strategic partnership to train insurance professionals.

Dr. Sidhu stated that IFMP should evolve beyond standalone training into a comprehensive ecosystem serving investors, professionals, intermediaries, and



students.

Dr. Mubashir Sadiq briefed on IFMP's self-sustaining operations funded through certifications and courses. Dr.

Sidhu directed teams to create a detailed roadmap with clear timelines and measurable outcomes for the SECP's consideration.

From Diplomacy to Economic Boom: Pak Role in Historic US-Iran MoU: Mian Zahid

Commerce Desk

KARACHI: Mian Zahid Hussain, President of PBIIF & AKIA, stated that the recent US-Iran Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) is a historic development ending Middle East tensions peacefully. He praised Pakistan's key mediating role as commendable and a source of pride, opening new paths for regional peace and averting a global economic crisis.

He attributed this success to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir's visionary leadership. Hussain noted that during tensions, global oil supplies disrupted, oil hit \$120/barrel, and Strait of Hormuz closure paralyzed trade, hurting developing countries like Pakistan.



The five-point peace formula presented by Pakistan and Islamabad talks proved Pakistan's role as a peace champion. He emphasized that PM Sharif and Field

Marshal Munir's leadership, along with the Field Marshal's courageous Iran visit despite security risks, gave Pakistan's diplomacy strength.

Deputy PM Ishaq Dar and Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi also contributed fully. The accord, named "Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding," lays a foundation for ceasefire and maritime trade restoration, acknowledging Pakistan's strategy.

Hussain said the understanding will stabilize global markets, aiding Pakistan's economic recovery. He urged all nations to sustain peace through political solutions. Now Pakistan must translate diplomatic success into economic prosperity through internal reforms for sustainable growth, uniting the nation with same vision as on the diplomatic front.

Strategic Blueprint to Unlock Pakistan's Mango Export Potential in China

Tahir Amin Malik

LAHORE: Adeel Munawar of the Pakistan China Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry emphasized Pakistan's potential to expand mango exports to China via quality, packaging, branding, and logistics. He noted China's growing demand for premium fruit offers opportunities for Pakistani exporters due to the mangoes' renowned taste and aroma. To maximize exports, quality standards, packaging, and value-added products must improve. Chinese consumers prioritize quality and pay premiums for high-quality goods. Adopting modern cultivation, post-harvest

management, and certifications is crucial for competitiveness. Pakistan's share in China's mango imports remains low despite strong production capacity, representing untapped potential. Strategic marketing, logistics, and consistent quality assurance can increase exports and bilateral trade. Investment in cold-chain infrastructure, preservation tech, and modern transport is essential for maintaining quality. Enhanced agricultural cooperation would boost exports and create opportunities for farmers, exporters, and agribusinesses, supporting sustainable economic growth and stronger trade relations.

Mashood Khan Calls for Higher Car Financing Cap and Lower Taxes in Federal Budget

Commerce Desk

Auto sector analyst Mashood Ali Khan noted that the federal budget offered no relief for car buyers. He urged the State Bank of Pakistan to raise the car financing ceiling from Rs3 million to Rs8 million and extend loan tenures from 3-5 years to 7 years, while also calling for lower sales tax on small cars. Khan pointed out that banks already provide special auto financing above Rs3 million to corporate clients based on company financials. This, he

said, gives the corporate sector room to pass on the benefit to employees for vehicle upgrades.

The industry is now looking ahead to the new Auto Policy, he added, which is expected to define the sector's future, including localisation targets for Korean and Chinese models. "From what we've seen, Japanese automakers keep one model on the market for at least five years, whereas Chinese and Korean brands roll out new models much more frequently," Khan said.

Infostealer Malware Thrives on Pirated Software Downloads, Kaspersky Warns



Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Analysis of five million infostealer logs from the dark web in 2025 shows that over one-third of infections start when users run files directly from temporary browser folders, highlighting user behavior as a key factor in credential theft.

The most common location for malicious files was the Windows temporary directory (35% of cases), while 32% involved process injection and living-off-the-land techniques typical of advanced malware like Lumma.

Infections often result from downloading software from untrusted sources or attempting illegal activation, with victims disabling security software as instructed. Files were disguised as legitimate installers, activators, or game modifications.

Kaspersky expert Sergey Shcherbel noted that attackers often only need to convince a user to run a file. To stay safe, users should download only from official sources, avoid pirated software, use strong security solutions like Kaspersky Premium, manage passwords securely with a dedicated manager, and never disable antivirus to install software.

From Sialkot to the World Stage

Khawaja Muhammad Asif: Statesmanship, Strategic Resolve and Pakistan's Defence Credibility in a New Global Order

A Legacy of Democratic Service and National Commitment

Analysis

Professor Dr. Muhammad Jalal Arif

In the seven-decade history of Pakistan's parliamentary democracy, few political families have sustained as deep a connection with public service as the Khawaja family of Sialkot. Khawaja Muhammad Safdar — a soldier, jurist and long-serving parliamentarian — built a political tradition rooted in discipline, integrity and an understanding that public office is a trust rather than a privilege. That conviction passed directly to his son. Khawaja Muhammad Asif inherited not only a constituency but a philosophy of public responsibility. Raised in a household where governance and national debate were part of daily life, he came to see politics as an instrument for strengthening institutions rather than personal advancement.



First elected to the National Assembly in 1993 and returned from Sialkot in election after election since, he has built one of the more substantial parliamentary records of his generation, having at different times held the portfolios of Petroleum and Natural Resources, Water and Power, Foreign Affairs, and — currently, as the 38th federal minister to hold the office — Defence. Born on 9 August 1949 in Sialkot, Khawaja Muhammad Asif's parli-

mentary career in fact began a few years earlier than his National Assembly debut: he was elected to the Senate of Pakistan in 1991 and served in the Upper House until 1993, where he first emerged as a strong and articulate parliamentary voice before moving on to contest, and win, his Sialkot National Assembly seat.

Sialkot: The Global Identity of Pakistan's Industry

To understand Khawaja Asif's political journey, it helps to understand Sialkot itself — a city that embodies Pakistan's entrepreneurial capacity and export potential. Internationally recognised for its sporting goods, surgical instruments and leather products, Sialkot has turned local craftsmanship into globally competitive industry, carrying the Pakistani name into markets across Europe, North America and Asia.

The development of Sialkot's business ecosystem, including the collective entrepreneurship organised through its Chamber of Commerce and Industry, reflects a culture of self-reliance and public-private cooperation that is

unusual in Pakistan's industrial landscape. As the city's long-standing representative in Islamabad, Khawaja Asif has carried the voice of its exporters, workers and manufacturers into national policymaking, consistently linking his defence and economic arguments back to the basic proposition that a secure Pakistan and a competitive Pakistan are the same project.

Qualities of International Statesmanship

What separates a capable domestic politician from a statesman of international standing is usually some combination of command over technical detail, composure under scrutiny, the capacity to build coalitions across ideological lines, and a track record of representing one's country credibly before foreign audiences. Khawaja Asif's career displays each of these traits to varying degrees.

His command of detail is most visible in parliamentary debate, where his fluency with figures on energy shortfalls, defence expenditure and fiscal constraints has frequently allowed him to set the terms of a discussion rather than merely respond to it. This is paired with a temperament that rarely appears unsettled by hostile questioning — a quality that matters most precisely in moments of national crisis, when ministers must explain difficult decisions to domestic and international audiences at the same time.

His multilateral engagement as Defence Minister has also widened in scope. In June 2025 he led Pakistan's delegation to the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation's Defence Ministers' Meeting in Qingdao, China, representing Islamabad's interests within a forum that brings together some of Asia's largest security establishments. In Islamabad, he has continued to receive credentialed diplomats from across the world, including ambassadors representing the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and African



states such as Somalia — the routine, unglamorous diplomatic work through which bilateral relationships are actually maintained.

Perhaps most distinctive is the sheer breadth of his ministerial experience. Few Pakistani politicians have held portfolios spanning energy, water resources, foreign affairs and defence within a single career, and that breadth gives him a cross-sectoral fluency that is often missing in officials whose experience is confined to a single domain — allowing him, for instance, to discuss defence procurement not in isolation but against the backdrop of fiscal space, energy security and export competi-

tiveness. **A Parliamentary Career Built on Debate and Political Understanding**

Khawaja Muhammad Asif is recognised as one of Pakistan's most prominent parliamentary voices. His political style is built on strong argumentation, command over facts and figures, and a willingness to respond to political challenges directly rather than evasively. His speeches in the National Assembly reflect extensive preparation across energy policy, foreign affairs, constitutional questions and national security, and his outspoken communication style has made him a distinctive,

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Malaysian Ambassador's Wife Fulfills Dream Visit to 'City of Saints', Celebrates Blue Pottery and Multani Heritage



Kiran Asim

MULTAN: In a visit that beautifully blended diplomacy with cultural discovery, Madam Amelia Amani Azhar, the gracious wife of Malaysia's High Commissioner to Pakistan, Dato' Muhammad Azhar Mazlan, fulfilled a long-cherished dream by spending several memorable days in the historic city of Multan. Her genuine enthusiasm and deep appreciation for Pakistan's heritage have left a lasting impression, further strengthening the warm and brotherly bonds between Malaysia and Pakistan.

From the moment she arrived, Madam Amelia Azhar made it clear that Multan held a special place in her heart. She had often expressed her desire to her husband: "When you go to Multan, I want to join you." When the official tour was finally planned, her excitement was palpable. "I was eagerly waiting for the day I would finally see Multan," she shared warmly with hosts and journalists.

Spiritual Beginning at Hazrat Shah Rukn-e-Alam

The visit began on a spiritual note with a visit to the majestic shrine of Hazrat Shah Rukn-e-Alam, one of Multan's most revered Sufi landmarks and a symbol of the city's identity as the "City of Saints". From the historic Dandama, the elevated platform adjoining the shrine, the delegation enjoyed a breathtaking panoramic view of Multan's old city, with its maze of narrow lanes, domed rooftops, and centuries-old architecture. Local historians gave the group



a detailed briefing on Multan's rich history, spanning over 5,000 years. They spoke of its role as a center of Sufism, trade, and craftsmanship. For Madam Amelia Azhar, the visit was a fitting introduction to Multan's spiritual soul and cultural depth.

Highlight: Immersion in Multan's Blue Pottery

The highlight of the trip, however, was the next day's extended exploration of the Multan Institute of Blue Pottery. Madam Amelia Azhar was captivated from the very first moment she stepped into the workshop. She spent nearly six to seven hours immersed in the world of this exquisite traditional craft, watching skilled artisans shape clay on wheels, fire pieces in kilns, and apply intricate cobalt-blue designs with remarkable



precision and artistry.



Her interest went far beyond admi-

take home as many stories as I can." **Call for International Recognition of Artisans**

Deeply moved by the craftsmanship, Madam Amelia Azhar expressed a heartfelt wish: "I hope the artisans of Multan can one day come to Malaysia to showcase and practice their art." She also voiced her desire to return to the Institute on her next visit to Multan, promising to spend even more time there and to bring a larger delegation.

In glowing words, she praised the artisans and their dedication to preserving a dying art. She hoped that blue pottery and similar Pakistani ceramics would gain greater international recognition. "This can help showcase Pakistan's talent to the world, brighten the country's image globally, and significantly boost exports," she observed with genuine admiration. She emphasized that cultural diplomacy through handicrafts can create economic opportunities while building bridges between nations.

Ambassador Joins the Tour

Later in the day, Ambassador Dato' Muhammad Azhar Mazlan joined his wife at the Institute. He too showed keen interest, received a comprehensive briefing on the technical process of blue pottery, and expressed his delight at the exceptional quality and heritage value of the craft. He noted that Malaysia and Pakistan share a deep appreciation for traditional arts, and such exchanges can inspire young artists in both countries.

Cultural Shopping and Culinary Delights

The cultural journey continued with shopping that reflected Multan's *Continued on Page 7*

Pakistan and Central Asia: Turning Connectivity Visions into Action by 2026

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Leading policy-makers and experts convened for an online seminar hosted by the Institute of Regional Studies, Islamabad, titled "Breaking the Connectivity Barrier to Central Asia: Pakistan and the C5 in 2026." Experts from Russia and Uzbekistan emphasized the urgent need to turn connectivity visions into

tangible action by 2026, highlighting that progress depends on implementation, coordination, and political will.

Ambassador Jauhar Saleem framed connectivity as a multi-dimensional agenda crucial for regional stability, noting that Pakistan's potential with Central Asia remains hampered by infrastructure gaps, instability in Afghanistan, and regulatory fragmenta-

tion. Dr. Daria Saprynskaya from Russia discussed the "integration of integrations" concept, linking the EAEU and BRI to build a flexible Eurasian architecture, with Central Asia as a critical bridge.

Mr. Salomov Bakhtiyor Ravshan o'g'li from Uzbekistan cited impressive trade growth from \$36 million to over \$400 million, projecting \$2 billion, and called for lower transport costs, maritime

access, digital customs, and security improvements.

Dr. Liudmila A. Pechishcheva underscored Pakistan's growing role as a transit hub via Karachi and Gwadar ports, with potential from rail, data, and energy corridors.

The session concluded that Eurasian connectivity is an urgent strategic necessity requiring execution and sustained investment.

Pakistan Reaches Historic Milestone in Fight Against Newborn Tetanus

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has moved closer to eliminating maternal and neonatal tetanus (MNT) following WHO pre-validation of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province in partnership with UNICEF. Approximately 94% of Pakistan's population—around 250 million people—now live in areas where neonatal tetanus is under controlled limits (less than 1 case per 1,000 live births). The pre-validation followed a comprehensive review involving field visits to high-risk districts such as Dera Ismail Khan, Battagram, and Kohistan, a desk review of three years of surveillance data, and a quality audit of vaccination campaigns in South Waziristan. KP's achievement results from strategies by national and provincial governments with UNICEF and WHO support, including improved immuniza-

tion for pregnant women, surveillance, community engagement, safer delivery practices, and enhanced health services. Around 12,000 Lady Health Workers, vaccinators, and frontline staff were central to reaching remote communities. In 2025 alone, WHO and UNICEF supported vaccination of 5.4 million pregnant women across Pakistan, including over 870,000 in KP. Gilgit-Baltistan, Islamabad Capital Territory, Pakistan-Administered Kashmir, Sindh, and Punjab have already achieved elimination, leaving Balochistan as the only province still working toward this goal. Despite progress, Pakistan remains among eight countries worldwide yet to eliminate MNT. Sustained efforts are needed to maintain gains. WHO and UNICEF reaffirm commitment to supporting Pakistan, especially Balochistan, to achieve full elimination and protect every mother and newborn.

Malaysian Ambassador's Wife Fulfills Dream Visit to 'City of Saints', Celebrates Blue Pottery and Multani Heritage

Continued from Page 7

vibrant traditions. Madam. Amelia Azhar explored the famous Khussa Market, showing great interest in the intricately embroidered traditional ladies' shoes. She admired the fine thread work, mirror work, and leather craftsmanship, making several purchases for herself and family members.

She was equally captivated by handmade Multani embroidered

clothes, carefully selecting elegant suits featuring traditional phulkari and aari work. The rich colors and detailed embroidery drew repeated compliments from her.

No visit to Multan would be complete without its legendary Sohan Halwa. The ambassador's wife found the traditional sweet irresistible and bought generous quantities to take home. She described it as "a perfect blend of tradition and taste" and said she would introduce it

to her friends in Kuala Lumpur.

People-to-People Diplomacy Madam. Amelia Azhar's visit was far more than a diplomatic tour; it was a celebration of Pakistan's living heritage and a testament to the power of people-to-people connections. Her warmth, curiosity, and sincere appreciation have not only highlighted Multan's treasures but also opened promising avenues for cultural collaboration between Malaysia and Pakistan.

She noted that when diplomats and their families engage directly with local culture, it creates lasting goodwill that goes beyond official statements. Her interactions with artisans, shopkeepers, and students reflected the spirit of mutual respect and friendship that defines Malaysia-Pakistan relations.

Multan Welcomes Cultural Ambassadors

Multan, and indeed all of Pakistan, warmly welcomes such distinguished

guests who see beyond official engagements to embrace the soul of our culture. The city's residents expressed delight that a high-profile visitor took such keen interest in their traditions and crafts.

Local officials said visits like this help promote cultural tourism and give international visibility to Multan's artisans. They expressed hope that Madam. Amelia Azhar's appreciation would encourage more Malaysian tour-

ists and art lovers to explore Pakistan.

We look forward to Madam. Amelia Azhar's promised return — and to many more such bridges of friendship being built, one exquisite blue pottery piece at a time. Her visit has added a new, colorful chapter to the long history of Malaysia-Pakistan cultural ties, reminding both nations that shared heritage and mutual respect remain the strongest foundations for future cooperation.

Trump Turns Turtle

Continued from Page 4

open was essential not only for regional stability but also for preventing worldwide economic turmoil. He warned that prolonged conflict could have triggered severe disruptions to shipping, energy supplies, and international trade. At one point he bluntly stated that the world was avoiding a potential economic disaster. Rather than presiding over a global downturn, Trump chose to pursue a settlement that promised lower oil prices, stronger markets, and renewed economic confidence.

Another revealing moment came when Trump addressed the issue of frozen Iranian assets. Historically, American administrations have often treated sanctions and frozen funds as permanent leverage. Yet Trump acknowledged a fundamental principle that surprised many observers. "We have taken their money," he said. "It's not our money. It's their money." He went even further. "If we didn't give it back, nobody would ever invest in the dollar again."

This statement reflects a recognition that America's financial power ultimately depends on trust in the international system. If foreign governments believe their assets can be permanently confiscated, confidence in that system

inevitably erodes.

Perhaps the most significant transformation, however, occurred at the level of strategic vision. As the conflict unfolded, Washington increasingly realized that its interests and Israel's interests were not always identical. The United States must manage relationships with dozens of nations across the Middle East. It must protect global commerce, preserve alliances, maintain military readiness, and avoid unnecessary economic shocks. Israel's concerns are immediate and regional. America's concerns are global. At some point, Washington appears to have concluded that continued escalation served neither American interests nor global stability.

This helps explain why Trump increasingly praised diplomatic efforts involving regional actors, including Pakistan and Qatar. He publicly acknowledged their role in facilitating negotiations and reducing tensions. In doing so, he signaled a broader shift away from confrontation and toward managed coexistence.

None of this means that Trump has become soft on Iran. On the contrary, he repeatedly emphasized that military force remains available if Tehran violates the agreement. His position is not one of surrender but conditional

engagement. The difference is that Washington now appears to view diplomacy as the preferred mechanism and military action as the last resort rather than the first.

That is a major transformation. Whether critics describe it as pragmatism, realism, or an open-ended conflict, the shift is undeniable. The president who once spoke primarily of bombs now speaks of reconstruction. The administration that once emphasized pressure now speaks of investment and economic recovery. The government that once focused exclusively on confrontation now emphasizes stability, trade, and regional normalization.

History will determine whether this policy succeeds. But one conclusion is already clear: faced with the prospect of economic turmoil, diplomatic isolation, and an open-ended conflict, Washington changed course. Trump did not simply negotiate a deal with Iran. He redefined America's approach to the conflict itself. And in doing so, he may have altered the future trajectory of the Middle East for years to come.

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

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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 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, international 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.

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Khawaja Muhammad Asif: Statesmanship, Strategic Resolve and Pakistan's Defence Credibility in a New Global Order

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if sometimes polarising, figure in Pakistan's political landscape.

As a long-standing political associate of Nawaz Sharif, his career also reflects a particular kind of political loyalty — the sort built over decades of shared setbacks and shared office rather than declared in a single speech — that has placed him among the more experienced parliamentary leaders of his party.

Defence Ministry: Stewardship Through Pakistan's Most Testing Period

Serving as Pakistan's Defence Minister is among the most consequential responsibilities in national governance, and Khawaja Asif's tenure has coincided with the most serious military confrontation Pakistan has faced in decades. Following the attack on tourists in Pahalgam in April 2025, tensions between Pakistan and India escalated sharply, culminating in air and missile strikes that both governments have since described in sharply different terms. Pakistan's armed forces responded with an operation named Bunyanum-Marsoos, and a ceasefire — reached with American involvement — took hold on 10 May 2025 after roughly nineteen days of confrontation that Pakistan has named Marka-e-Haq, the Battle for Truth.

Throughout the crisis, Khawaja Asif was a central figure in articulating Pakistan's position to domestic and inter-

national audiences, coordinating between the civilian government and military leadership and presenting Islamabad's account of events across numerous television interviews and parliamentary sessions. The events themselves remain contested — India disputes elements of Pakistan's narrative just as Pakistan disputes India's — but there is little dispute that the episode tested Pakistan's civil-military coordination and crisis-communication apparatus more severely than any event in recent memory, with Khawaja Asif's ministry at the centre of that test.

In recognition of his role during this period, President Asif Ali Zardari conferred upon Khawaja Muhammad Asif the Nishan-e-Imtiaz at a ceremony held at Aiwan-e-Sadr on 14 August 2025, alongside other senior civilian and military leaders honoured for their contributions during Marka-e-Haq. The award cited his decisive response in strengthening national resolve and improving coordination during the crisis, and stands as formal recognition of his contribution to presenting Pakistan's defence perspective with confidence and clarity, and to strengthening the country's national narrative at a critical moment.

The Pakistan Armed Forces: A Story of Discipline and Institutional Resolve

The credibility of any country's defence establishment rests on decades of institution-building

rather than any single event, and Pakistan's armed forces are no exception. Their record includes sustained counterterrorism operations along the western border, participation in United Nations peacekeeping missions, and large-scale disaster-response operations during floods and earthquakes that have repeatedly drawn on the military's logistical capacity. What changed in 2025 was less the institution itself than its visibility: the decisions taken during Marka-e-Haq, and the political leadership that communicated them, became more closely watched internationally than at almost any point in recent years.

Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir: From the Battlefield to the Global Stage

No figure embodied Pakistan's military posture during this period more than General Syed Asim Munir, Chief of Army Staff since November 2022. In recognition of his role during Marka-e-Haq, the federal cabinet promoted him to the rank of Field Marshal in May 2025 — only the second time in Pakistan's history that the rank has been conferred, the first having gone to Ayub Khan in 1959. In November 2025, following the 27th constitutional amendment, he additionally assumed the newly created post of Chief of Defence Forces, becoming the first officer in Pakistan's history to simultaneously hold the Army Chief's office and unified command of the country's defence forces.

Field Marshal Munir's profile

acquired a distinctly international dimension in the same period. In June 2025, as tensions between Iran, Israel and the United States escalated sharply across the Middle East, he travelled to Washington at the invitation of senior American military leadership, addressing the U.S. National Defense University on Pakistan's counterterrorism doctrine and meeting officials including the commander of U.S. Central Command, General Michael Kurilla, who publicly credited Pakistani intelligence cooperation with contributing to the capture of senior ISIS-K figures. Pakistani officials framed the visit — coming as it did amid a regional war involving three other states — as evidence that Islamabad's military leadership had gained renewed standing in Washington at a volatile moment. It is worth noting plainly that this characterisation originates substantially from Pakistan's own diplomatic messaging and has not been corroborated to the same degree by independent international observers; what is not in dispute is that the visit reflected a deliberate effort by Pakistan's senior military leadership to position the country as an active participant in regional diplomacy rather than a bystander to it.

Within Pakistan, the government's own assessment of the year has been considerably more emphatic, crediting Field Marshal Munir's leadership with deterring further escalation during Marka-e-Haq and arguing that restraint

after the ceasefire, as much as the military operation itself, secured the country's standing in international forums. Independent assessments of the conflict's military and diplomatic outcomes vary, and readers seeking a full picture should weigh Pakistani and Indian accounts alongside neutral reporting. What is reasonably clear is that the events of 2025 raised Pakistan's defence establishment — and the civilian ministry responsible for representing it — to a higher international profile than at almost any point in the past two decades.

Foreign Affairs and Pakistan's Global Representation

Khawaja Asif's earlier tenure as Foreign Minister, from 2017 to 2018, extended his role from domestic politics into international diplomacy, engaging international partners on regional security, economic cooperation and bilateral relations. That experience has continued to inform his outlook as Defence Minister: he has consistently argued that foreign policy in the present era is inseparable from trade, investment and technology, and that Pakistan's long-term security depends as much on strengthening exports and attracting investment as on military preparedness.

That diplomatic record has also included a consistent voice on the Palestinian question. At national and international forums alike, Khawaja Asif has repeatedly drawn attention to the rights of the Palestinian people and,

in particular, to the suffering of children caught up in the conflict, framing Pakistan's position around the broader themes of justice, peace and human dignity.

The Voice of Parliament and Democratic Responsibility

One of the defining features of Khawaja Asif's career has been his sustained engagement in parliamentary debate — defending government positions, responding to opposition criticism in detail, and treating the floor of the National Assembly as a forum for substantive argument rather than ceremony. That approach reflects a broader view, shared by a generation of Pakistani legislators of his era, that parliament functions as a platform for national accountability as much as for legislation.

The Road Ahead: Leadership, Innovation and National Progress

Pakistan's prospects rest on a young population, a strategic geographic position, and industrial centres such as Sialkot that have already shown an ability to compete globally. Translating that potential into sustained progress will require leadership that can connect local economic development with national priorities, and national priorities with a fast-changing international environment — one in which defence policy, trade policy and diplomacy are no longer separable from one another.

Khawaja Muhammad Asif's career — from Sialkot's constituency politics to the Defence Ministry of a nuclear-armed state

navigating one of its most difficult years — illustrates both the opportunities and the constraints of that task. It is a career still being tested by events, including some, like Marka-e-Haq and its aftermath, whose final historical assessment is not yet settled.

Conclusion: A Continuing Legacy of Service

The story of Khawaja Muhammad Asif is one of inheritance, accumulated experience and continuing responsibility. From the legacy of Khawaja Muhammad Sadr to his own three decades in Pakistani public life, he remains an influential figure in the country's parliamentary and national affairs, and 2025 placed both his ministry and Pakistan's military leadership under more sustained international attention than in many years.

Pakistan's progress will continue to depend on leaders who can hold together the aspirations of ordinary citizens with the demands of a volatile regional and global environment. Khawaja Asif's journey from Sialkot to the institutions of national defence is, in that sense, not only an individual political career but one chapter in the longer, still unfinished story of Pakistan's democratic development.

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Meeting

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, chairing a meeting of the Cabinet Committee on State-Owned Enterprises (CCoSEs) at the Finance Division today.



Photo: PID

Pakistani media helped strengthen ties with US, says Natalie Baker

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: US Charge d'Affaires Natalie Baker on Friday praised the Pakistani media for its balanced and positive coverage, saying it had played an important role in promoting relations between Pakistan and the United States.

Speaking on Pak-US relations, Baker expressed gratitude to Pakistani media organisations for their constructive reporting and said the coverage had



contributed to strengthening mutual understanding between the two countries. She said the Pakistan-US

partnership was currently at its highest level and described recent developments as a positive sign for

bilateral ties.

Baker said US President Donald Trump, Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir remained in regular contact, which was helping further deepen cooperation between the two countries.

She said recent developments between Pakistan and the United States were strengthening bilateral relations and opening new avenues for cooperation. The US diplomat also

described Pakistan's role in global politics as increasingly important and central, saying Islamabad was playing a significant part in regional and international affairs.

Baker said recent agreements between the two countries would help promote regional stability and contribute to lasting peace.

She reiterated the United States' commitment to maintaining strong relations with Pakistan and advancing cooperation in areas of mutual interest.

DPM, Iranian FM exchange views on regional developments

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar Friday spoke with Foreign Minister of Iran, Seyed Abbas Araghchi and the two leaders exchanged views on regional developments and highlighted the ceasefire violations conducted by Israel in Lebanon, expressing serious concern over the situation.



DPM/FM felicitated the leadership, government, and people of the Islamic Republic of Iran on

the signing of the historic "Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding" with the United States. He also conveyed his best wishes for the commencement of the next phase of negotiations, expressing hope that the process would move smoothly and yield positive outcomes.

FM Araghchi expressed gratitude for Pakistan's constructive and sustained mediation efforts. FM Araghchi also thanked

DPM/FM for Pakistan's facilitation in the repatriation of thirty (30) Iranian nationals, including 8 fishermen rescued at sea by the United Kingdom and 22 crew members recently interdicted by the United States. The transit arrangements of whom are currently being coordinated by Pakistan.

Both sides agreed on the importance of continued engagement and agreed to remain in close contact

Naqvi, Ali Hasan Zardari discuss law and order, development projects in Sindh

News Desk

ISLAMABAD: Sindh Provincial Minister Ali Hasan Zardari met Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi on Friday to discuss the law and order situation in Sindh, ongoing development projects and matters of mutual interest.

During the meeting, the two leaders held detailed discussions on maintaining peace and stability in the province as well as the progress of development initiatives.

Ali Hasan Zardari briefed the interior minister on ongoing development works in Sindh and shared updates on various projects being carried out in the province.

Mohsin Naqvi assured the provincial minister of the federal government's full cooperation and support in matters related to development and public welfare.

Both sides also exchanged views on issues of mutual interest and reaffirmed their commitment to working together for the province's progress and stability.



SC rules judge with tainted reputation cannot continue in office

News Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court of Pakistan has ruled that a judge with a bad reputation and doubts surrounding his integrity cannot continue to hold judicial office.

In a detailed nine-page judgment given by Justice Shahid Waheed, the court restored the dismissal of an Additional District and Sessions Judge posted in Mailsi.

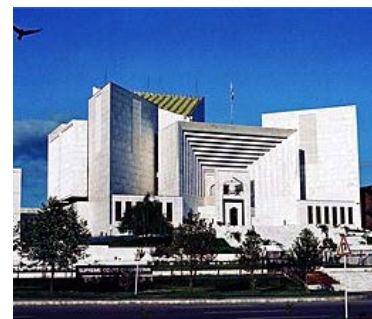
The ruling overturned a decision that had converted the judge's dismissal into retirement.

The court observed that the judiciary's greatest strength is public confidence and that any damage to a judge's credibility undermines trust in both the courts and the rule of law.

It emphasized that the judicial institution required not only actual integrity but also the appearance of integrity in the eyes of the public.

The judgment stated that the standard expected of judges goes beyond merely proving innocence and requires them to remain above all suspicion.

According to the court, maintaining



public trust in the justice system is essential for the effective functioning of the judiciary.

Setting aside the Service Tribunal's ruling, the Supreme Court held that converting the dismissal into retirement was based on an incorrect interpretation of the law.

The court maintained that where a judge's bad reputation has been established, dismissal, not retirement, is the appropriate penalty.

The judgment further noted that allowing such a judge to retire with benefits could create the impression that compromises on integrity are acceptable.

PM congratulates Saudi Crown Prince on signing of Islamabad Peace Deal



City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif held a telephone conversation with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman to discuss regional peace efforts, particularly the recently signed Islamabad Peace Deal between Iran and the United States. During the call, the Prime Minister congratulated the Crown Prince on the agreement and thanked him for Saudi Arabia's consistent support in promoting peace and stability. He praised the Crown Prince's leadership and stated that the Kingdom's backing, along with support from other Gulf countries, played a key role in facil-

itating the deal.

Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman congratulated the Prime Minister and commended the efforts of Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir in helping achieve the agreement. Both leaders agreed on the importance of ensuring that future negotiations between Iran and the United States continue smoothly through dialogue and diplomacy while remaining alert to any attempts to undermine the process.

They also expressed satisfaction with Pakistan-Saudi Arabia relations and discussed finalizing a comprehensive economic package. The Prime Minister renewed his invitation for the Crown Prince to visit Pakistan.

Allama Tahir Ashrafi hails Pakistan's peace role, pays tribute to leadership



City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Renowned scholar Allama Tahir Ashrafi, in his Friday sermon, declared the day a "Day of Thanksgiving" and praised Pakistan's historic role in establishing world peace.

He said Allah has honored Pakistan twice: "First with victory on the battlefield, and now with the honor of establishing peace in the world." Allama Ashrafi credited this achievement to the "wise leadership" of Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir and the

Prime Minister of Pakistan, saying their vision and prudence enhanced Pakistan's credibility globally.

He also thanked Islamic and friendly nations for trusting Pakistan and supporting its peace initiatives. He urged citizens to preserve these blessings through unity, discipline, and service.

Concluding with prayers for national progress and stability, he said Pakistan's message of peace, rooted in sacrifice, should inspire the world to choose dialogue over conflict.

Khawaja Mehran Arshad booked under Section 124-A for Provocative Speech in Rawalakot

Bureau Report

MUZAFFARABAD, AJK: The Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) government has filed a sedition case under Section 124-A of the AJK Penal Code against Khawaja Mehran Arshad, leader of the banned Jammu Kashmir Joint Awami Action Committee (JAAC). The case stems from a speech he allegedly delivered on June 14 in Dhirkot, Rawalakot, which authorities described as highly provocative and aimed at inciting rebellion within Pakistan's armed forces.

According to the FIR, registered at Muzaffarabad Civil Secretariat Police Station, intelligence and monitoring agencies verified the content of the speech. Officials claim Arshad urged Kashmiri personnel serving in the Pakistan Armed Forces to revolt against their institution and return to Azad Jammu and Kashmir. Authorities view these remarks as a serious threat to state security and a significant shift from JAAC's earlier focus on social and economic issues.

Government officials stated that while peaceful expression of grievances had previously been tolerated, encouraging mutiny crossed a consti-



titutional red line and amounted to open rebellion. Legal experts noted that Section 124-A addresses sedition and actions intended to promote hatred, contempt, or rebellion against the state and its institutions.

The case follows the recent banning of JAAC under the Anti-Terrorism Act after violent protests, attacks on law enforcement personnel, and road blockades across several areas of AJK. Investigations into possible external links are continuing.