



Daily The Spokesman

A Leading National Daily



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Next phase of Iran-US talks will be the hardest, Ishaq Dar forecasts

Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Ishaq Dar has said that Iran was happy to downblend its nuclear stockpile, instead of "shipping the uranium out". In an interview with Al-Arabiya and Al-Hadath, Pakistan's foreign minister reflected on Iran's position during negotiations with the US and the challenges that remain before a final agreement can be reached.



Punjab CM orders shifting to digital economy to nab tax evaders

In order to tighten the screws around tax evaders, Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz on Tuesday ordered the transfer from cash economy to digital economy. Chairing an important meeting on the revenue collected from the province, the chief minister questioned that if the world could shift from cash to digital, why can't Pakistan?

Simultaneously published from Islamabad, Lahore and Multan

Muharram-ul-Haram 8, Wednesday, June 24, 2026

www.dailyspokesman.net

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Daily Spokesman Vol: 20, Issue: 65

Price Rs. 25.00 Pages 8

Warm welcome

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif receives the President of Islamic Republic of Iran Dr. Masoud Pezeshkian at the Prime Minister's House on Tuesday.



Photo: PID

Pezeshkian says Pakistan visit aims to cement US-Iran agreement



Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said on Tuesday that his visit to Pakistan is intended to acknowledge Islamabad's role in facilitating a memorandum of understanding between Iran and the United States, while also advancing efforts to ensure its full implementation in line with international law.

Speaking in Tehran before departing for Islamabad, Pezeshkian said the invitation from Pakistan's prime minister

followed extensive diplomatic efforts by Pakistan's leadership, including Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Field Marshal Asim Munir and Interior Minister Syed Mohsin Naqvi, in helping coordinate and finalise the US-Iran agreement.

He said Pakistani officials had played a significant role in the process, adding that their efforts to support an agreement and regional peace were "remarkable".

"This visit, in addition to appreciating Pakistan's cooperation, aims to follow up on the continuation of the path so that all clauses of the memorandum are implemented within the framework of international law and the rights of the Iranian nation," Pezeshkian said.

Continue on Page 7

National Assembly passes Rs18.77 trillion budget for FY 2026-27

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: The National Assembly on Tuesday passed the federal budget for FY 2026-27 with a total outlay of Rs18.771 trillion, aimed at boosting economic growth and giving tax relief to key sectors. Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb moved the motion, which was approved along with the Finance Bill 2026 after several amendments.

The budget, effective July 1, projects 4% economic growth and 8.2% inflation for the next financial year. The FBR tax-collection target is set at Rs15.264 trillion, with non-tax revenues estimated at Rs5.336 trillion.

An allocation of Rs1 trillion is earmarked for the federal PSDP, with over 60% going to transport/communications, water resources and energy. Rs838 billion is set aside for BISP. Remaining funds will go to higher education, agriculture,



health and IT.

New tax measures include revised income tax slabs, advance tax on property transactions, and a 5% withholding tax on income from social media platforms. Individuals earning up to Rs600,000 annually remain tax-exempt. The bill also revises duties on imported and electric vehicles, imposes tougher penalties for non-compliance with FBR notices, and makes e-filing of returns mandatory from July 1. Relief measures for the salaried class and incentives for agriculture, construction and exports are also included.

After passage, the National Assembly was adjourned until 11am Wednesday.

PM Shehbaz vows to further strengthen Pakistan, Iran cooperation across multiple sectors

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday welcomed Iranian President Dr. Masoud Pezeshkian and reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to strengthening bilateral cooperation in trade, economic development, infra-

structure, reconstruction, and regional peace.

At delegation-level talks, PM Shehbaz said Pakistan and Iran would continue joint efforts for shared prosperity and thanked Tehran for trusting Pakistan's "sincere and honest mediation efforts" to promote lasting peace. He called Iran's people brave and

resilient, expressing confidence they would build a flourishing economy. "True brotherhood requires no questions or answers," he said, pledging support for peace initiatives based on dignity and mutual respect.

He conveyed regards to Iran's Supreme Leader, praised Pezeshkian's calm leadership, and

offered condolences for innocent lives lost in the recent conflict. He also lauded Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir for working "untiringly" to facilitate dialogue and the MoU signing, and thanked Ishaq Dar and Mohsin Naqvi for diplomatic efforts. He appreciated support from Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Egypt for

regional stability.

PM Shehbaz clarified that ballistic missiles were neither included in nor discussed during the MoU negotiations, as the issue was not on the agenda. He warned against attempts to create confusion, stressing the MoU focuses only on peace and stability.

PM confident Iran-US MoU will lead to lasting agreement, promote global peace

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif told the National Assembly that an MoU signed between Iran and the US, with Pakistan as mediator, could become a long-term agreement

after 60 days of technical talks, promoting global peace and stability. He called it a historic moment for Pakistan's diplomatic role.

Shehbaz said leaders of both countries met recently in a high-level committee at Burgenstock,

Switzerland, where Pakistan's sincere facilitation led to a joint statement and an immediate ceasefire. Technical-level negotiations will continue for 60 days. He noted that Pakistan's mediation earned international recognition, saying the global

respect gained "could not have been bought even by spending billions."

The PM also announced that Iranian President Dr. Masoud Pezeshkian would arrive in Islamabad the same day for talks on expanding bilateral cooper-

ation. Responding to Opposition Leader Mehmood Khan Achakzai, he stressed that all four provinces contributed to Balochistan's development and reiterated that Pakistan's sustainable economic growth requires equal progress in all provinces.

Iranian President conferred honorary fellowship in cardiac surgery by CPSP

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Iranian President Dr. Masoud Pezeshkian on Tuesday was awarded an Honorary Fellowship in Cardiac Surgery by the College of Physicians and Surgeons Pakistan (CPSP) in recognition of his distinguished contributions to public health, medical education, healthcare research, and his dedicated service to society.

The honorary fellowship was conferred during a special cere-



mony held here as part of President Pezeshkian's one-day official

visit to Pakistan, the Prime Minister's Office Media Wing said in a news release.

Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and Chief of Army Staff and Chief of Defence Forces Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir attended the ceremony, underscoring the significance of the occasion and the strong ties between Pakistan and Iran.

The award acknowledges President Pezeshkian's long standing commitment to advancing healthcare services, promoting medical

education, supporting scientific research, and serving humanity with dedication and perseverance.

The conferment of the honorary fellowship is also expected to further strengthen cooperation between Pakistan and Iran in the medical sector and would help enhance collaboration between medical institutions of the two countries, particularly in the fields of medical education, academic exchanges, healthcare research, and the exchange of faculty members and examiners.

IHC remained off due to closure of Red Zone

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) remained closed on Tuesday due to the closure of the Red Zone because of the arrival of a foreign delegation.

With the approval of the Chief Justice, Registrar Muhammad Yar Walana issued a notification stating that the cause list has been canceled and officers and staff have been directed to work from home.

However, the district courts of Islamabad remained open and continued functioning as usual.

The notification further stated that litigants, lawyers, and court staff may face severe difficulties in reaching the High Court due to the situation, so no judicial proceedings were held in the Islamabad High Court. It was also directed that officers and staff would not leave their station without prior permission from the relevant authority.

Road closed

ISLAMABAD: Police stop vehicles at Kashmir Chowk ahead of arrival of Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian, in the Federal Capital. Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian arrived in Islamabad for a state visit that is as much a gesture of gratitude as it is a statement of intent. The trip on Tuesday – his first overseas visit since the United States and Israel launched attacks on Iran on February 28 – comes a day after Pakistan and Qatar announced that the first round of high-level US-Iran talks in Burgenstock, Switzerland, had yielded a 60-day roadmap towards a final deal.



Photo: Online

PML-N and Muslim Conference unite behind Khawaja Dilawar Wani for AJK Assembly seat

Abdul Majeed Tahir

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan, Engineer Amir Muqam, and the Prime Minister's Adviser on Political Affairs, Rana Sanaullah Khan, met with Khawaja Dilawar Wani, candidate for Constituency LA-45 Valley-6 of the Azad Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly, at Parliament House in Islamabad.

Following the meeting, the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and the All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference jointly announced Khawaja Dilawar Wani as their consensus candidate for Constituency LA-45 Valley-6.

The announcement was made by Federal Minister Engineer Amir



Muqam and Prime Minister's Adviser Rana Sanaullah Khan, who reaffirmed their parties' support for Khawaja Dilawar Wani.

During the meeting, detailed discussions were held regarding the upcoming elections, the political situation in the constituency, and the electoral strategy for the campaign. Both leaders expressed complete confidence in Khawaja Dilawar Wani and described him as the unanimous candidate of the alliance.

Speaking on the occasion, Khawaja Dilawar Wani thanked the party leadership for their trust and support. He pledged to continue serving the people and to further advance his mission of public service with renewed commitment and dedication.

AJK leaders warn of billions in losses from electricity subsidies in Press Conference

Bureau Report

MUZAFFARABAD: Chief Secretary AJK Khushhal Khan and IG Police Captain (Retd) Liaquat Ali Malik



jointly addressed a press conference in Muzaffarabad on the law and order situation in Azad Kashmir. The Chief Secretary stated that there is a risk of losing Rs 8-10 billion annually due to an electricity price of Rs 3 per unit, while subsidies on flour and electricity are causing increased financial pressure. He noted that keeping flour prices low has led to negative market trends, with Rs 20-25 billion depending on the governments of Pakistan and Azad Kashmir. He added that the banned Joint Action Committee leaders are terrified and facing consequences for violence and casualties, with no blanket amnesty. Political blackmail has ended, and a peaceful, rational dialogue has begun. Legal action is now necessary against these leaders, who are confused and fearful of failure. The government offered constitutional options on seats, including all-party conferences and judicial routes, but the Committee increased demands from 2 to 38 points. The government appealed for restraint during Muharram but was ignored. Road blockades and violent actions are unacceptable, disrupting essential commodity delivery and causing hardship for LoC residents. Trucks have been stopped and burned, and a hijacked relief truck was recovered. Subsidies in Azad Kashmir are higher than in Pakistan. Protesters chant slogans against Pakistan and the Army, seeking Indian help.

PML-N Announces Candidate for Key Abbaspur Constituency ticket awarded to Yasin Gulshan

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: A major political development has emerged in the electoral landscape of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) as the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) has officially awarded its party ticket for the highly significant Abbaspur constituency.



The constituency had attracted considerable attention from political observers across AJK, with widespread speculation surrounding the potential candidacy of Osama Zahid. However, the party leadership defied expectations and officially nominated Chaudhry Yaseen Gulshan as the PML-N candidate for the upcoming elections.

Political analysts are viewing the decision as highly significant, particularly because Osama Zahid, who was widely regarded as a strong contender for the party ticket, was ultimately unsuccessful in securing the nomination.

With Abbaspur once again becoming a focal point of AJK politics, the nomination of Chaudhry Yaseen Gulshan is being regarded as a strategic and carefully considered decision by the PML-N leadership ahead of the elections.

VC Prioritizes Student Success and Regulatory Compliance at Women University Multan

Irum Asim

MULTAN: Prof. Dr. Syeda Shahida Batool, Vice Chancellor of The Women University Multan, directed the Institute of Computer Science and Information Technology to address HEC observations on Computer Science programmes and prepare students for the National Competency Test.



In a meeting with faculty, she emphasized timely liaison with HEC, teaching quality, and student performance improvement through intensive courses, mock tests, and modern strategies. The VC stressed identifying deficiencies and providing guidance to all students, not just top performers, to enhance academic standing. She requested weekly progress reports from the institute chairperson. The meeting aimed to ensure transparency, regulatory compliance, and high standards. Proposals included regular assessments and structured preparation for tests. Participants were optimistic that planned efforts would lead to student success and institutional distinction. The VC reiterated prioritizing quality over quantity in admissions to support capable students, urging faculty to strengthen professional development efforts.

Over 1,200 Candidates File Nominations for Azad Jammu and Kashmir Elections

Bureau Report

MUZAFFARABAD: 1265 candidates from 45 constituencies of Azad Jammu and Kashmir submit their nomination papers in connection with the upcoming elections in Azad Jammu and Kashmir. 218 candidates have submitted their nomination papers in 12 constituencies of Jammu and Kashmir Pakistan. The total number of nomination papers collected from all the constituencies is 409., detailed as under:- Constituencies LA.1 Mirpur.1 to 28, LA.2 Mirpur.2 to 32, LA.3 Mirpur.3 to 43, Miwar 2. LA. Submit the papers. In the constituencies of Bhimber, LA.5 Bhimbar.1 to 26, LA.6 Bhimbar.2 to 24, and LA.7 Bhimber.3 to 33 papers were received. In Kotli constituencies, LA.8 Kotli.1 to 28, LA.9 Kotli.2 to 24, LA.10 Kotli.3 to Most 53, LA.11 Kotli.4 to 43, LA.12 to L8 A. 2A, 5 to 2 Kotli. Nomination papers of candidates collected The spokesperson said that the total number of nomination papers collected from the constituencies of five divisions is 294. In this division, the constituencies LA.14 Bagh.1 to 33, LA.15 Bagh.2 to 38, LA.16 Bagh.3 to 28, and LA.17 Bagh.4 (Khota) have 16 candidates facing each other. The circles of Poonch include LA.18 Poonch.1 to 32, LA.19 Poonch.2 to 19, LA.20 Poonch.3 to 14, LA.21 Poonch. Moreover, LA.23 Poonch and Siddhanvati 6 to 42 and LA.24 Poonch and Siddhanvati 7 to 31 candidates can submit their nomination papers for all constituencies of Muzaffarabad division. The total number of nominations for papers is 344. Constituency LA. 27 Muzaffarabad. 1 to 45, LA. 28 Muzaffarabad. 2 to 40, LA. 29 Muzaffarabad. 3 to most 59, LA. 30 Muzaffarabad. 4 to 33, and LA. There are crows. In Jhelum Valley constituencies, 22 papers were received from LA.32 Muzaffarabad.6 (Jhelum Valley) and 31 from LA.33 Muzaffarabad.7 (Jhelum Valley). While in Wadi Nelum constituencies, 41 candidates from LA.25 Nelum and 33 candidates from LA.26 Nelum have submitted their nomination papers. The total number of nomination forms collected from 10 constituencies is 218. Among the constituencies in Jammu, constituencies are LA.34 Jammu.1 to 21, LA.35 Jammu. A.37 Jammu.4 to 20, LA.38 Jammu.5 to 13, and LA.39 Jammu.6 to 19 candidates have to submit papers. Constituencies in Valley Kashmir include LA.40 Valley Kashmir.1 to 19, LA.41 Valley Kashmir.2 to 21, LA.42 Valley Kashmir.3 to 9, LA.43 Valley Kashmir.4 to 25 centuries, and LA.6.4. Valley Kashmir.6 to 9 candidates submit nomination papers.

Minister Reviews Muharram Security, Civic Arrangements

Raza Naqvi

ATTOCK:23rd June, Punjab Minister for Communications and Works Malik Sohaib Ahmed Bharath on Tuesday chaired a high-level meeting in Fateh Jang to review security and administrative arrangements for Muharram-ul-Haram across Attock district, directing authorities to ensure foolproof security and uninterrupted civic services during the holy month.

The meeting, held at the office of the Assistant Commissioner Fateh Jang, was attended by Deputy Commissioner Attock Rao Atif Raza, District Police Officer

Sardar Mohammad Rohan Khan, Additional Deputy Commissioner General Aneel Saeed, Assistant Commissioner Fateh Jang Ahsan Ali, Assistant Commissioner Attock Arif Mahmood Qureshi, former MPA Iftikhar Ahmed Khan, Chief Executive Officer Education Dr Muhammad Azhar, Chief Executive Officer Health Dr Asad Ismail, Rescue 1122 in-charge Dr Mian Muhammad Ashfaq, officials of the Highways and Buildings Department, members of the District Peace Committee, including Pir Saadat Ali Shah of Chora Sharif and Syed Waqar Naqvi, besides officers of relevant departments.

Religious Scholar Urges Parents to Instill Quranic Values and Sunnah in Youth at Monthly Gathering

City Desk

RAWALPINDI: Allama Syed Riaz Hussain Shah, Patron-in-Chief of Idara Taleemat-e-Islamia Pakistan, urged parents to promote Islamic values at home, prioritize the moral and spiritual upbringing of the younger generation, and strengthen their attachment to the Holy Quran and the Sunnah.

The monthly Mahfil-e-Zikr and Dars-e-Quran, organized by Idara Taleemat-e-Islamia Khayaban-e-Sir Syed, was attended by a large number of men and women from the local community.

The event began with the recitation of the Holy Quran, while Hafiz Sheikh Muhammad Qasim Deputy Director conducted the proceedings.

INVITATION TO BIDS PROCUREMENT OF GOODS

1. The Military Accountant General Office, Rawalpindi (Pakistan Military Accounts Department (PMAD)) has reserved Funds for the procurement planned for FY 2026-27. The Military Accountant General Office, Rawalpindi (Pakistan Military Accounts Department (PMAD)) intends to apply part of the proceeds of this Fund to cover eligible payments under the contract for the "Procurement, Installation / configuration of 08 Web Application Firewall (WAF) Licences".

2. The Military Accountant General Office, Rawalpindi (Pakistan Military Accounts Department (PMAD)) invites E-bids from eligible Bidders for procurement of goods described in the bidding documents on EPADS v2.0.

3. Single Stage-One Envelope will be used by adopting Least Cost Based Selection (LCBS) Technique for the subject procurement, in line with the Public Procurement Rules, 2004 and any Regulations, Regulatory Guides, Procurement Guidelines or Instructions issued by the Authority from time to time.

4. All Bids must be accompanied by a Bid Security amount described in Bid Security Section in Bidding Document in the form of Pay Order, Banker's Cheque, Call at Deposit, Demand Draft. Where Bid Security is not required by the Procuring Agency, Bidders are required to furnish Bid Security Declaration as specified in Bidding Document.

5. E-Bidding documents, containing detailed terms & conditions, specifications and requirements etc. are available on e-Pak Acquisition and Disposal System (EPADS) at <https://vendors.epads.gov.pk/>.

6. Bidder(s) are required to get themselves registered on EPADS v2.0 on or before Wednesday, July 15, 2026 11:00 AM. E-bids will be opened using EPADS v2.0 on the same day at Wednesday, July 15, 2026 11:30 AM. Manual submission of Bids shall not be entertained. Those vendors who have not yet registered on the new version of EPADS v2.0, may register themselves on <https://vendors.epads.gov.pk/>. A tutorial to explain the registration process is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MNW6T38v7te>

7. In terms of Rules 48 of Public Procurement Rules, 2004 Grievance Redressal Committee (GRC) is notified for the subject procurement and notification copy is available on the procuring agency's website and on Authority's website at (www.ppra.org.pk).

Military Accountant General Office, Rawalpindi (Pakistan Military Accounts Department (PMAD)), Accounts Officer
Kashmir Road Saddar Cantt., Rawalpindi, Rawalpindi (District),
Rawalpindi Division (Division), Punjab (Province).
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SERVICES

Namaz Timings

Fajr 3:14 am
Zohr 12:10 pm
Asr 5:11 pm
Maghrib 7:22 pm
Isha 9:06 pm

EMERGENCY

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

Women Police Stations

Islamabad 9222596
Rawalpindi 9270601-20

ENQUIRY

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

HOSPITALS

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

DEPARTMENTS

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

COMPLAINTS

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

PSCA Enhances Muharram Security with Real-Time Safe City Camera Access for Police Via LTE Handsets



Bureau Report

LAHORE: Punjab Safe Cities Authority has equipped police with modern digital gadgets and advanced surveillance for Muharram-ul-Haram security. PSCA's upgraded LTE Smart Communication System now turns officers' LTE handsets into a "Mobile Command and Control Center".

Per PSCA, field officers can access real-time Safe City and 4G camera feeds on their handsets, monitor other processions, Majalis and sensitive locations, and receive live alerts from the Muharram Procession Monitoring System. Data including flash points, routes, and head/tail positions will be visible on the devices for faster command and response.

The secure Safe City LTE network ensures uninterrupted communication even if commercial mobile signals fail. Officers can use video calls, live chat and instant messaging on one handset for seamless district-control room coordination.

PSCA said these indigenous digital solutions, under CM Maryam Nawaz's "Safe Punjab" vision, make Muharram security more efficient by enabling swift response and ensuring mourner safety.

Not Fake Receipt, But Real Tax': Punjab Govt Tightens Noose Around Tax Evaders & Fraudsters

Bureau Report

LAHORE: Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif chaired a meeting on Punjab's revenue collection, in which Important decisions were made to meet revenue collection targets in the province.

She said that every transaction in Punjab—from marriage halls and food chains to businesses and farmhouses—will now be accounted for, as the Punjab government has decided to install cameras for monitoring marriage halls, markets, farmhouses, and major food chains.

She added that strict action will be taken against all those issuing fake receipts to conceal sales. She highlighted that consideration is also being given to making digital payments mandatory at large restaurants instead of cash collections.

She expressed with a sense of

surprise that if world can move from cash to digital economy, why can't Pakistan?

Chief Minister Punjab vowed zero tolerance for tax theft; as cameras will spot it, and the digital system will catch it.

She directed the relevant authorities to submit a weekly report on tax collection and sectoral mapping; as a revenue target of Rs 528.5 billion has been set for the fiscal year 2026-27. She also directed them to transition from cash economy to digital payments.

Earlier, the authorities briefed her that Punjab's revenue collection has increased by 38%, rising from Rs 250 billion to Rs 346 billion; as the scope of Punjab Revenue Authority (PRA) was expanded from 10 to 26 districts. They said that an Intelligence & Investigation Wing, Taxpayer Audit Wing, and Legal Wing have also been established within PRA for the purpose.



Desolated Road due to security

ISLAMABAD: A view of Srinagar Highway looks deserted looks as the highway closed for general traffic on the arrival of Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian, in the Federal Capital.



Photo: Online by Sultan Bashir

Kamalia MC all set to provide facilities to Muharram mourners: Chief officer Ali Raza

Zafar Chishti

TOBA TEK SINGH: Chief Officer Municipal Committee Ali Raza said all arrangements are complete for Muharram-ul-Haram to facilitate mourners, processions and citizens.

Per district administration directives, cleaning and clearance of all procession routes is done, with obstacles removed and roads/areas sanitized to prevent inconvenience.

For the summer heat, clean drinking water will be provided through water coolers and saebels at various



Locations.

Lighting arrangements

are also ensured at Imam-bargahs, procession routes and key spots, with street lights repaired, extra lights installed, and uninterrupted power supply arranged.

Municipal staff will stay active throughout Muharram, monitoring sanitation, drainage, lighting and other services to keep the environment safe, clean and peaceful.

Ali Raza appealed to the public to cooperate with the administration and uphold peace, brotherhood and religious harmony during the holy month.

SECP Approves Second SPAC IPO, Marking 14th Listing Approval in FY 2025-26

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) has approved the Initial Public Offering (IPO) of LSE SPAC-II, the second Special Purpose Acquisition Company (SPAC) to be listed on the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX). The approval marks the 14th IPO approved during FY 2025-26, underscoring continued growth in Pakistan's primary capital market and increasing corporate confidence in equity financing.

LSE SPAC-II will offer 20 million ordinary shares, representing 95.23 percent of its post-issue paid-up capital. Of



these, 18 million shares have been allocated to Pre-IPO investors, while the remaining 2 million shares will be offered to retail investors at a price of Rs. 10 per share.

SPACs are established to raise capital from investors for the purpose of identifying

and acquiring existing operating businesses within a specified timeframe. Their introduction in Pakistan reflects ongoing efforts to diversify capital market products, facilitate innovative financing structures, and broaden investment opportunities.

The current fiscal year has been one of the most active periods for public offerings on the PSX, reflecting strengthening issuer confidence in the capital market as a preferred platform for fundraising, business expansion, and long-term capital formation.

SECP Chairman Dr. Kabir Ahmed Sidhu said, "The growing number of IPOs reflects increasing confidence in Pakistan's capital markets. New listings help businesses raise long-term capital and create more investment opportunities. SECP is committed to making investing simple and accessible so that more Pakistanis can participate in wealth creation and economic growth."

Pakistan-Romania Collaboration Discussed to Strengthen Trade, Tourism & Investment Relations



City Desk

ISLAMABAD: A meeting was held at the Embassy of Romania in Islamabad between Mr. Rauf Raja, CEO Brain Designer Pakistan, and Mr. Eduard Preda, Deputy Head of Mission, Embassy of Romania

During the meeting, both sides discussed opportunities to further strengthen bilateral cooperation between Pakistan and Romania in the fields of public private partnership trade, tourism, hospitality, and investment.

It was agreed in principle to organize the Pakistan-Romania Business Expo in Bucharest, aiming to create a dynamic platform for business communities of both countries to explore partnerships, investment opportunities, and commercial collaboration.

Special emphasis was placed on promoting Romania as an attractive destination for international investors under the theme "Explore & Invest in Romania." The initiative is expected to showcase Romania's investment potential across multiple sectors while encouraging greater engagement from Pakistani businesses and entrepreneurs.

Sabri Sisters Light Up Spotify's Times Square Billboard as EQUAL Pakistan Ambassadors

News Desk

ISLAMABAD: Following their announcement as Spotify EQUAL Pakistan Ambassadors for Q2 2026 earlier this quarter, the Sabri Sisters were featured on Spotify's iconic Times Square billboard in New York City on June 17, joining a growing list of Pakistani women artists showcased on a global stage through the EQUAL program. Torchbearers of a legendary musical legacy and breaking stereotypes in a genre traditionally dominated by men, the breakout duo of Sanam and Anamta Sabri is bridging the gap between spiritual traditions and contemporary sounds.

Nieces of the legendary late Amjad Sabri and direct descendants of the iconic Sabri Brothers, the Sabri Sisters first made headlines in 2017 when they released a Persian-Punjabi manqabat in honor of their late uncle on the first anniversary of his passing. Since then, tracks such as the hit OST "Meri Zindagi Hai Tu" with Asim Azhar and the viral "Maghron La" have helped cement their reputation as artists bringing a fresh perspective to Sufi and qawwali-inspired music.

Shifa International Earns Rare Global Academic Medical Center Accreditation

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Shifa International Hospitals Limited earned Joint Commission International (JCI) accreditation as an "Academic Medical Center" — one of fewer than 70 institutions worldwide and a landmark for Pakistan's healthcare sector.

JCI AMC status requires simultaneous excellence in clinical care, medical education, and human subjects research under the highest global safety standards. Shifa's assessment showed "full compliance across all evaluated standards" with a clear SAFER™ risk matrix.

For Pakistan, a nation of 240M+ with growing medical talent, this puts it on the global healthcare map. With Shifa and Aga Khan University Hospital both JCI AMC-accredited, Pakistan becomes one of few developing countries with two elite centers, signaling regional leadership in care, education, and research.

As an AMC, Shifa converges healing, teaching, and discovery under internationally benchmarked standards. The achievement opens doors to global research collaborations and shows patients, students and professionals that world-class healthcare is achievable at home.

Group Chairman/Chief Editor: **Almass Ayoub Sabir**
 Vice Chairman: **Asim Nazir Ahmad**
 Editor: **Naveed Ahmad Khan**
 Head Editorial Advisory Board: **Amjad Mehmood**
 Bureau Chief Karachi: **Khurram Jaffrani**
 (jaffrani@adpluse.pk)
 Bureau Chief Lahore: **Syed Afraz Ali Nazish**
 (afrazalishah@gmail.com)
Head Office: AIMS Building, Street No. 4, H-8/1, Islamabad.
 spokesmanislamabad@gmail.com
 Phone: +92 51 2227123,
 WhatsApp +92 346 5008408
Karachi office: A111, Block C, Gulsha-e-Jamal, PRECHS,
 Karachi Phone: 021-33399390
 Email: spokesmankarachi@gmail.com
Lahore Office: 7-E, Samanberg, Johar Town.
 spokesmanlahore@gmail.com
 Daily The Spokesman available only on annual subscription

Israel Versus Iran: Before and After the War

Before the war, Israel stood in the Middle East as a regional bully wearing the armor of American power. Its military superiority was real, but its confidence came from something larger than its own tanks, aircraft, intelligence networks, or missile-defense systems. It came from the certainty that the United States would protect it on every front: militarily, diplomatically, financially, and politically. Israel acted as if it could strike anywhere, occupy territory, defy resolutions, ignore neighbors, and still remain immune from consequences because Washington would always stand behind it.

That illusion has now been shaken. The Iran-Israel war has exposed a reality that was long hidden beneath layers of propaganda and military spectacle: Israel's regional dominance was never entirely its own. It was borrowed power. It was American weapons, American money, American diplomatic cover, American vetoes, American intelligence, and American fear projected through Israel. Without that unquestioned backing, Israel is not an untouchable regional hegemon. It is a small state surrounded by a vast Muslim neighborhood whose anger has accumulated for decades.

The playground analogy fits perfectly. Israel behaved like a smaller bully protected by a much larger bully. So long as the larger protector stood behind it, the smaller bully could threaten everyone

else. But when the larger protector begins to step back, reassess its interests, or ask whether this relationship is damaging its own standing, the smaller bully suddenly faces the reality of the playground. The crowd it once intimidated no longer looks helpless.

That is the great change after the war. The United States appears to have realized that unconditional support for Israel is no longer cost-free. Washington's interests in energy security, global shipping, regional stability, relations with Gulf states, nuclear inspections, oil markets, and wider diplomatic influence cannot be sacrificed endlessly at the altar of Israeli maximalism. Israel was useful to the United States when Israeli goals and American objectives overlapped. But when Washington required restraint, diplomacy, and regional de-escalation, Israel resisted. That resistance has created a visible wedge.

The emerging U.S.-Iran framework is the clearest proof of this new reality. Direct talks in Switzerland, mediation by Pakistan and Qatar, discussions on nuclear inspections, the Strait of Hormuz, frozen assets, oil sales, and Lebanon show that Washington is no longer viewing the Middle East only through Israel's eyes. It is now talking directly to Tehran because Iran is a reality

that cannot be bombed out of existence, sanctioned into surrender, or excluded from regional security.

This alone marks a historic shift. Before the war, Iran was presented as isolated, cornered, and vulnerable. After the war, Iran is sitting across the table from the United States, discussing inspections, shipping lanes, sanctions waivers, oil exports, frozen funds, and regional ceasefire mechanisms. That is not isolation. That is recognition.

The Strait of Hormuz also demonstrated Iran's strategic weight. When a vital waterway through which a major portion of global oil moves becomes part of the negotiation, the world is reminded that Iran is not a marginal actor. It sits at the heart of global energy geography. The serious regional order must include Iran, not merely threaten it.

The same applies to Lebanon. The reported creation of a deconfliction mechanism involving the U.S., Iran, and Lebanon shows that even conflicts involving Hezbollah cannot be treated as isolated Israeli military problems. They are now part of a wider regional equation. Yet Israel continues to insist that its forces retain "full freedom of action" in southern Lebanon and that they will remain there as long as necessary. This defiance may please hardliners, but it

also reveals Israel's inability to adjust to the new environment.

Militarily, the war has also changed perceptions. Israel entered the conflict with an image of invincibility. Its air force, Iron Dome, David's Sling, Arrow system, cyber capability, and intelligence reach had created the impression that no regional adversary could seriously challenge it.

But mass drone and missile warfare has altered the battlefield. Iran demonstrated that quantity, persistence, and saturation can challenge even the most advanced defense systems. Hezbollah and other regional actors have also learned that cheaper, mass-produced systems can create pressure that billion-dollar defense platforms cannot always absorb.

This is not to say Israel has become militarily weak in an absolute sense. It remains heavily armed and technologically advanced. But the myth of effortless superiority has been broken. Before the war, Israel believed escalation would always favor it. After the war, escalation looks dangerous, expensive, and uncertain.

The psychological damage may be even greater than the physical damage. A country that sells itself as invincible cannot easily absorb the perception of vulnerability. Its citizens now see that endless military operations do not bring lasting security. Internal divisions, protests, political fragmentation, and

Continued on Page 7



Analysis

Qamar Bashir

International Day of Women in Diplomacy

On the International Day of Women in Diplomacy, we pay tribute to the women who have served with distinction in advancing dialogue, understanding and cooperation among nations. Their work has strengthened international engagement and supported the peaceful resolution of disputes in difficult and often uncertain circumstances.

Pakistan has a long record of women contributing to diplomacy and public life. Begum Ra'ana Liaquat Ali Khan represented Pakistan abroad in its early years with dignity and distinction. Begum Shaista Ikramullah, a pioneering diplomat and parliamentarian, was among Pakistan's earliest representatives at the United Nations who played an important role in advancing human rights and amplifying the voice of newly independent nations. Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, the first woman Prime Minister in the Muslim world, expanded Pakistan's international engagement and strengthened its place in global forums.

Over time, Pakistani women have served in senior positions across the foreign service, including as ambassadors, permanent representatives, foreign secretaries and heads of mission. They have represented the country in bilateral relations, at the United Nations and in other multilateral institutions.

Their contributions are visible across all areas of diplomacy. They help advance Pakistan's interests while keeping open channels of communication, particularly at moments when tensions between states are high and when careful negotiation is required. In a period shaped by armed conflict, geopolitical tension, climate-related pressures, technological change and new security risks, their role remains central to steady and credible engagement.

The ultimate purpose of diplomacy is to create conditions for peace, progress and prosperity. Advancing these objectives requires careful preparation, disciplined negotiation, close attention to detail and the ability to understand differing perspectives. Women diplomats have made important contributions in all these areas and continue to strengthen diplomatic institutions through their professionalism, skill and commitment to public service.

Pakistan remains committed to ensuring equal opportunity in public service. Our Constitution guarantees equal rights and equal treatment under law, and we continue to support the full participation of women in national institutions, including foreign service. Increasing numbers of Pakistani women now serve with distinction in diplomatic missions and international organizations, carrying responsibility in demanding environments and complex negotiations.

Recent diplomatic developments have again highlighted the value of sustained engagement and quiet diplomacy. Pakistan's facilitation of a memorandum of understanding between the United States of America and the Islamic Republic of Iran reflects this approach, centred on dialogue and the avoidance of escalation. Pakistani women diplomats, alongside their colleagues, have contributed to these efforts in various capacities and continue to play an important role in advancing Pakistan's engagement at multilateral forums, including the United Nations.



Cartoon by Amjad Rasmī. (Courtesy of Asharq Al-Awsat)

Iran's Antidote to Western Pressures

Danish Iqbal

Since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, Iran's founding leader Ruhollah Khomeini raised the slogan "Neither East nor West, Islamic Republic" a foundational ideology that reflected Iran's commitment to resist subjugation and pursue governance aligned with Islamic values and anti-imperialist principles. For over four decades, Iran has maintained this strategic consistency despite relentless external pressure. As an adversary of the United States and its allies, Iran has endured not only military confrontations but also severe economic hardship through sanctions designed to cripple its economy and destabilize its political system. Yet somehow, Iran has persisted, emerging as a significant regional power.

Iran's resistance strategy has ensured its survival in a polarized global system where most nations conform to norms imposed by more powerful actors. The typical choice is submission to avoid pressure. Iran chose defiance. This ideological commitment has become embedded in Iranian political culture, a principle that transcends individual leaders or temporary circumstances. It is precisely this consistency that allows Iran's current leadership to pursue an ambitious economic strategy even amid an unprecedented crisis.

Yet the statistics paint a stark picture. In 2026, Iran faces an unprecedented economic crisis that tests this resistance strategy like never before. Inflation has spiraled to between 40 and 68 percent, with food prices escalating at catastrophic rates. Bread and cereals have surged 140 percent, while oils and fats have climbed 219 percent in the year through March 2026. The Iranian rial has lost 60 percent of its value since mid-2025, forcing the Central Bank to introduce a 10-million rial note, the largest denomination in the country's history. These figures translate into human suffering: between 22 and 50 percent of Iranians now live below the poverty line, while 57 percent experience some level of malnourish-

ment. Unemployment among males aged 25-40 has reached 50 percent, and energy shortages have caused months of widespread blackouts across the country.

The structural nature of this collapse cannot be overstated. The International Monetary Fund projects Iran's economy will shrink by 6.1 percent in 2026, while the World Bank forecasts continued contraction. These are not temporary setbacks but the cumulative result of decades of sanctions, regional instability, and the recent military conflict with the United States and Israel. By any conventional measure, Iran's economy is in free fall, and ordinary Iranians bear the brunt of this crisis through poverty, hunger, and unemployment.

Yet it is precisely at this moment of maximum crisis when the population suffers acutely that Iran's leadership has designated 2026 as the year of "Resistance Economy Under National Unity and National Security." This is not a retreat from the founding ideology; it is a deliberate intensification of it. According to Iran's leadership, the "resistance economy" is defined as "the economy determining prosperity of the country under pressure, sanctions and serious enmities."

This choice reveals something crucial about how Iran's leadership views the future: they believe that accepting short-term economic hardship is the price of long-term strategic independence and eventual great power status. The strategy is framed as "economic jihad"—a collective national effort involving government, elite, business, and civil society to withstand international pressure through domestic production and reduced dependence on foreign markets and capital.

For many developing nations facing economic coercion, Iran's approach offers a counterintuitive lesson. The West argues that Iran's economic collapse results from government mismanagement. This is misleading. The current crisis is deliberately engineered Western sanctions and military pressure are designed to trigger regime change through economic collapse. That Iran has not collapsed under this pressure suggests that

resistance strategies, however costly, can prevent the complete loss of sovereignty.

During recent military conflicts, ordinary Iranians demonstrated their willingness to endure hardship rather than submit to external pressure over nuclear issues or geopolitical competition. This popular support indicates that the Iranian public understands the resistance economy not as a temporary measure but as a necessary foundation for long-term independence.

The strategic calculus is this: subjugation might provide short-term relief from sanctions, but it surrenders future bargaining power. Resistance maintains leverage. Recent international negotiations suggest that the United States has fewer options for coercing Iran than it once believed—a shift that reflects Iran's ability to sustain itself despite sanctions.

Whether Iran's resistance economy strategy will ultimately succeed remains uncertain. The human cost is undeniable. The economic statistics are devastating. However, the leadership's decision to emphasize this strategy in 2026 not when times were easier, but when they are hardest—suggests a calculated belief that short-term pain is the price of long-term independence.

For the Global South, the lesson is not that resistance guarantees success, but that strategic consistency in the face of pressure can prevent complete subjugation. Iran's gamble may ultimately fail. But it demonstrates that alternatives to unconditional submission exist, even when the costs are severe. That recognition itself is significant for nations navigating a world where economic coercion has become a primary tool of great power politics.

Iran's resistance economy is not a solution to immediate suffering. It is a bet on the future and a rejection of the premise that compliance is the only option available to smaller or non-aligned powers.

The author is a student of International Relations at the National Defence University, Islamabad. He can be reached at Danishiqb345@gmail.com

Restoring Normalcy in Azad Kashmir: Rejecting Disruption for the Sake of the People

Abdul Samad

The recent turmoil in Azad Jammu and Kashmir has tested the resilience of its people. With the Joint Action Committee declared outlawed and effectively sidelined, the region is witnessing a gradual return to normalcy. Life in most districts has resumed its rhythm, elections are moving forward despite restrictions under Section 144, and ordinary citizens are once again prioritizing daily existence over prolonged street agitation. Yet the episode leaves important lessons about leadership, external interference, and the true cost of unrest.

Prolonged demonstrations and protests, while rooted in grievances, have disproportionately burdened common Kashmiris. Markets stayed shuttered, schools closed, and essential services were disrupted for days. Families already facing economic pressures found themselves further strained by lost wages and rising prices of basic commodities. The sight of one leader delivering fiery speeches from the stage while another simultaneously appealed for dialogue exposed a lack of coherence within the Joint Action Committee. This inconsistency undermined public trust and prolonged uncertainty. More damaging was the committee's own decision to walk out of an ongoing dialogue process, an action that shifted responsibility for the breakdown away from the authorities and onto the protest organizers themselves.

The human cost has been tragic. The loss of lives among both civilians and security personnel during the unrest remains deeply regrettable. Government forces exercised

notable restraint for over a week and a half, avoiding escalation even as tensions rose. Such measured conduct deserves recognition, especially when contrasted with the visible suffering inflicted on the very population the protests claimed to champion. In Rawalakot, where normalcy has lagged behind other districts, the lingering effects of roadblocks and sporadic clashes continue to hinder recovery, underscoring how localized resistance can delay collective healing.

Equally concerning is the emerging realization that the Joint Action Committee was penetrated by elements pursuing agendas unrelated to local welfare. Malicious and factually dubious narratives were injected into the movement, steering it toward outcomes that served third-party interests rather than the people of Azad Kashmir. Civil society and ordinary citizens have begun to recognize this pattern. When a movement's internal contradictions become this visible—fiery rhetoric paired with contradictory calls for talks, followed by withdrawal from negotiations—the public rightly questions whose interests are truly being served. Historical precedents in the region show that externally influenced agitations often fracture communities without delivering sustainable gains.

Against this backdrop, the resumption of the electoral process stands as a constructive development. Thousands of citizens accompanied candidates to file nomination papers across districts, demonstrating that political participation remains the preferred channel for change. That this occurred despite Section 144 restrictions underscores the determination of both candidates and voters to uphold democratic mechanisms. The exception of

Continued on Page 7

Seminar Spotlights Internet Shutdowns and Surveillance in Kashmir

Spokesman Report

GENEVA: On the sidelines of the 62nd UN Human Rights Council session, the Kashmir Institute of International Relations (KIIR) and Community Human Rights Advocacy Centre (CHRAC) held a seminar titled "Digital Rights and Civic

Spaces." Human rights defenders, digital rights experts, journalists, and civil society representatives discussed shrinking civic space in conflict-affected regions, focusing on Jammu and Kashmir. Participants noted that digital tools like internet shutdowns, mass surveillance, targeted content

removal, and algorithmic censorship are increasingly used to suppress peaceful dissent and obstruct the right to self-determination recognized under the UN Charter and Security Council resolutions.

Speakers stressed that prolonged communications blackouts and monitoring of social media/

messaging apps have restricted Kashmiris' ability to document rights violations, mobilize peacefully, and engage with international mechanisms.

A KIIR representative stated that digital tools meant to expand participation are being weaponized to silence demands for accountability

and UN-recognized rights, undermining both digital rights and fundamental freedoms essential for self-determination.

The seminar called for greater international scrutiny of digital repression in disputed territories, independent monitoring of internet governance during conflict, and

protection of civic space online and offline. Participants urged UN member states and the Human Rights Council to address these practices in their human rights reviews.

Moderated by Syed Faiz Naqashbandi, speakers included Prof. Christa, Dr. Waleed Rasool, Ms. Naila Altaf Kayani, and Mr. Zaffar Qurashi.

Pakistan, TİKA and KOSGEB Agree to Deepen Cooperation for D-8 Development

Spokesman Report

ANKARA: Pakistan held productive meetings in Ankara with Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TİKA) President Abdullah Eren and KOSGEB President Ahmet Serdar Ibrahimcioglu to advance collaboration in development, SMEs, and digital transformation across D-8 Member States.

Discussions with TİKA President Abdullah Eren focused on strengthening development cooperation and

exploring joint initiatives in capacity-building and digital transformation. Both sides agreed to design programs that advance sustainable development and deliver tangible benefits to the peoples of the D-8 region.

In talks with KOSGEB President Ahmet Serdar Ibrahimcioglu, the two sides discussed ways to empower small and medium enterprises through innovation, entrepreneurship, technology, artificial intelligence, and improved financing mechanisms. Strengthening business ecosystems for SMEs was also

a key area of cooperation.

Appreciation was expressed for the strong support from TİKA and KOSGEB for practical cooperation in their respective domains. The engagements are expected to translate into joint projects that promote sustainable growth and economic opportunities for D-8 countries.

The meetings reflect Pakistan's continued commitment to leveraging partnerships with Türkiye to expand South-South cooperation under the D-8 framework.



Pakistan Rice Festival 2026 Held in Netherlands with Over 100 European Business Leaders

News Desk

THE HAGUE: The Embassy of Pakistan in the Netherlands, in collaboration with the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP), hosted the "Pakistan Rice Festival 2026" under the theme "From Pakistan's Fields to Europe's Tables" to showcase Pakistan's world-renowned Basmati rice to European markets.

Over 100 prominent importers, retailers, food industry experts, chefs, diplomats, media representa-

tives and business leaders from across Europe attended the event. Guests sampled premium varieties of Pakistani Basmati, including the famous Super Kernel Basmati.

The festival highlighted Pakistan's agricultural heritage and growing export potential. Participants were briefed on Pakistan-Netherlands cooperation in agriculture and food sectors, and the upcoming "Food Exhibition 2026" scheduled in Karachi from 23-26 November 2026 was presented as Pakistan's

next major trade milestone.

Speaking at the event, Pakistan's Ambassador to the Netherlands Syed Haider Shah said Pakistani Basmati is not just an agricultural product but a unique Geographical Indication (GI)-protected brand representing centuries of farming heritage and international quality standards. He stressed Pakistan's commitment to quality, sustainability, traceability and compliance with international food safety standards.

"European consumers' growing

focus on authenticity, quality and sustainability presents a major opportunity for Pakistan. We are ready to become a reliable trade partner to meet this demand," the ambassador said. He invited Dutch and European business circles to Food Exhibition 2026 in Karachi to connect exporters, producers, processors and international buyers.

Guests were also served traditional and modern dishes prepared with Pakistani Basmati and received detailed information on GI certi-

fication, quality assurance, traceability systems and alignment with EU market requirements.

A special activity titled "Score for Pakistan" also highlighted Pakistan's success in manufacturing world-class footballs, underscoring the country's broader industrial and export capabilities beyond agriculture.

The Netherlands remains one of Pakistan's key export destinations in the EU, with bilateral trade reaching around USD 1.94 billion. Rotterdam Port and Amsterdam

Schiphol Airport play a vital role in connecting Pakistani products to European markets. Over 50 Dutch companies, including Royal FrieslandCampina, Veon (Jazz), Vopak and Frisian Egg, are currently operating in Pakistan.

The Pakistan Rice Festival 2026 is part of the Embassy's economic diplomacy strategy to boost Pakistani exports, strengthen trade partnerships, and create new business opportunities between Pakistan, the Netherlands and European markets.

A New Era in Pakistan-Iran Relations. A new Dawn in Bilateral Relations

Asim Tanveer

ISLAMABAD: Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian landed in Islamabad today — his first overseas trip since the United States and Israel launched strikes on Iran on February 28. He came not as a head of state seeking aid, but as one arriving to say thank you. The question Pakistan now asks itself quietly, in the corridors of power in Rawalpindi and the ministries of Islamabad, is this: what does gratitude actually buy?

A Mediator Steps Into History

The welcoming billboards went up in Islamabad overnight — giant murals showing Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian flanked by Pakistan's President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi by Tuesday morning, Islamabad's Margalla Road was sealed, its Red Zone locked down, and a high-level motorcade was threading through a city that had quietly but unmistakably become the diplomatic capital of the Middle East crisis.

Pezeshkian's arrival follows one of the most consequential diplomatic feats in Pakistan's modern history. Over the past several weeks, Islamabad — acting alongside Qatar — helped broker the Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding, a framework ceasefire that brought the United States and Iran to the negotiating table in Bürgenstock, Switzerland, for the first time in decades. That agreement, signed earlier this month after more than 100 days of open war, established the conditions for a 60-day diplomatic process aimed at permanently ending the conflict.

"President Pezeshkian said the visit aims both to express appreciation and to advance implementation of all provisions of the Memorandum in line with international law and Iran's rights," the Iranian government confirmed ahead of departure. He praised Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Field Marshal Asim Munir, Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi, and the Pakistani government for what he called instrumental work in bringing the process to fruition.

Pakistan's Foreign Ministry confirmed that during the visit, "the two sides will review the full spectrum of bilateral relations and explore new avenues to further deepen cooperation across diverse sectors, including trade, energy, border security, people-to-people exchanges, and regional connectivity." Senate Chairman Yousaf Raza Gilani, National Assembly Speaker Ayaz Sadiq, and Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar were all scheduled to call on the Iranian leader.

It is, by any standard, a remarkable



diplomatic moment for a country that rarely receives credit for what it achieves behind closed doors.

What the Deal Actually Unlocks

The Islamabad MOU is not yet a permanent peace agreement. Its most urgent deliverable, however, is already reshaping the global economy. As part of the emerging framework, the U. S. Treasury Department issued a 60-day general license allowing Iran to produce, transport, and sell crude oil, petrochemicals, and petroleum products through August 21, 2026. The waiver also permits transactions in U. S. dollars, giving Tehran access to foreign currency and energy revenues for the first time in years.

Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent confirmed that Iran has committed to

that Tehran is willing to be watched.

The significance of Hormuz cannot be overstated. Before the February war, roughly a fifth of all seaborne oil trade in the world transited through that narrow waterway. Iran's closure of the strait sent energy prices surging and triggered rationing across South and East Asia. Its reopening — even partially, even temporarily — was enough to push crude oil prices down by nearly four percent in a single morning when the deal framework was first announced. That is the measurable, immediate value of Pakistan's mediation.

The toll question also remains on the table. Iran's suggestion of collecting a transit toll on the Strait of Hormuz was quickly contested by the international community, and rightly so. The strait

kistan gas pipeline — the so-called "Peace Pipeline" — a project that has languished in bureaucratic and geopolitical limbo since it was first agreed in 2009.

The pipeline, originally envisioned as a tripartite Iran-Pakistan-India project, was reduced to a bilateral arrangement after India withdrew citing U. S. pressure. A 25-year contract was signed between Pakistan and Iran to transport gas from Iran's South Fars gas field all the way to Nawabshah in Sindh — a journey of approximately 1,500 miles. Iran completed its section years ago. Pakistan never built its side, facing an \$18 billion penalty threat from Tehran and a flat refusal of sanctions waivers from Washington. "Now, the US and Iran are negotiating a peace deal in Islamabad and hopes have arisen that Washington may lift sanctions on Tehran," one energy expert told The Express Tribune in April.

If sanctions are eased as part of a final deal, the pipeline's construction becomes not just feasible but urgent. Pakistan's energy demand, according to the World Bank, is expected to rise by 70 percent before 2030. The country currently imports expensive LNG from Qatar and relies on an energy infrastructure wholly inadequate for its growing population. Iranian gas — cheap, accessible, overland — would be a structural solution to a crisis that has hobbled Pakistani industry and driven up electricity costs for years.

Iran has also historically expressed interest in building a major oil refinery in Gwadar with a production capacity of 400,000 barrels, though that project stalled alongside the pipeline. Easing sanctions opens both doors simultaneously. The pipeline talks will take time — there are technical, financial, and legal dimensions still to be resolved — but the political environment has never been more favourable.

Gwadar Rises as India's Chabahar Loses Ground

In the meantime, Pakistan has already moved. In April 2026, under SRO 691(I)/2026, Islamabad issued the "Transit of Goods through the Territory of Pakistan Order 2026," formally designating Gwadar Port as a commercial transit hub for Iran-bound third-party cargo. The Gwadar-Gabd corridor — approximately 89 kilometres — now offers the shortest direct land route to Iran, cutting transit times from sixteen to eighteen hours down to two or three, and reducing freight costs by an estimated 45 to 55 percent compared to alternative routes.

This has a direct competitive impact on India's position. New Delhi has long invested in Iran's Chabahar Port as a strategic gateway to Central Asia that bypasses Pakistan. Iran's growing wari-



ness of India's role — particularly given what observers describe as India's relatively passive, and at times unhelpful, posture during the conflict — has created a strategic opening. As one regional security analysis put it, Gwadar's expanded role "directly challenges the strategic rationale behind New Delhi's long investment in Chabahar." India has been effectively sidelined from the Gwadar-led connectivity architecture that is now taking shape.

The economic upside for Pakistan is layered. Formal overland trade with Iran, historically stunted by sanctions, can now substitute for the vast informal smuggling economy that has long drained state revenues. According to the Ministry of Petroleum, by 2024 alone, 2.8 billion litres of smuggled Iranian oil — worth 227 billion rupees in lost government revenue — entered Pakistan through illicit border networks. As sanctions lift and legal trade becomes viable, that shadow economy can be brought into the formal sector, generating tax revenue, creating jobs, and reducing the financing available to criminal and militant networks.

The Security Dividend: Finishing the BLA Question

Pakistan's mediation role has also unlocked something rarely discussed openly: a new seriousness in Iran-Pakistan security cooperation.

The Balochistan Liberation Army has long exploited the Pakistan-Iran border as a sanctuary. Security analysts and Pakistani officials have for years argued that BLA leadership coordinates cross-border operations from Iranian territory and has received logistical support through Iranian-adjacent networks. Islamabad has viewed this with deep frustration — and has also pointed to what it characterises as India's intelligence services using the porous western

frontier as a corridor for proxy operations against the Pakistani state.

The new bilateral warmth gives Pakistan an opportunity it has never had before: to press Iran into genuine joint counter-terrorism cooperation along the 909-kilometre shared border. In a promising early signal, immediately after the May 24 train bombing in Quetta, the Iranian Foreign Ministry publicly condemned the attack — a diplomatic gesture that would have been unthinkable a year ago.

Iran, which has itself observed India's unhelpful posture during this crisis, is now inclined toward greater caution in its regional alignments. That shift benefits Pakistan. A more cooperative Iran on border security, combined with formal trade channels that erode smuggling networks, would directly reduce the BLA's operational capacity. Criminal revenues, including drug trafficking across the frontier, sustain insurgent finances. Formalising trade cuts off that oxygen.

The Bigger Picture: What Pakistan Has Earned

Pakistan spent decades as the country the world leaned on and rarely rewarded. It absorbed millions of Afghan refugees. It served as the transit route for American wars. It took on the burden of regional instability at significant cost to its own security and economy. And it largely did so without recognition.

This week is different. The Iranian president's visit to Islamabad — his first overseas trip since the February conflict began — is a moment of symbolic and material significance. Pakistan did what no other country could or would do: it maintained lines to both Washington and Tehran simultaneously, provided a diplomatic framework that preserved Iranian dignity while addressing American security concerns, and helped prevent a war from becoming a catastrophe.

The dividend being negotiated now — cheaper oil, a revived pipeline, Gwadar's ascent, formalised trade, a calmer border — is not guaranteed. The peace process has 60 days to reach a permanent agreement, and the pitfalls are real. Uranium enrichment, the long-term status of Hormuz, the future of Hezbollah in Lebanon, and the shape of any sanctions relief framework all remain deeply contested.

But for the first time in a long time, Pakistan sits at a table where it has leverage — not borrowed leverage, not leverage as a favour to a great power — but leverage earned through sincere, sustained diplomacy. That is rarer than it sounds. And Islamabad would be wise to spend it carefully.

Bull & Bears
PSX 100-Share
Index Fluctuation

Pakistan: PSX 100-Share Index	
Current	Prev. Close
177,692.92	178,471.86
Day's High	Day's Low
179,405.55	177,674.37
Index Value	Change
25,123,595,490	-778.94
Percentage	Time
-0.44%	23 Jun, 2026 4:30 pm

Europe: FTSE 100 Index	
Index Value	Change
10,428.85	-9.00
Percentage	Time
-0.086%	23 Jun, 4:35 pm GMT+1

USA: Dow Jones Industrial Average	
Index Value	Change
51,839.69	+126.98
Percentage	Time
+0.25%	23 Jun, 1:28 pm GMT-4

Asia Pacific: Nikkei Stocks Average	
Index Value	Change
69,788.38	-2,565.58
Percentage	Time
-3.55%	23 Jun, 3:45 pm GMT+9

Open Market Forex Rates		
Currency	Buying	Selling
Australian Dollar	193.37	196.95
Bahrain Dinar	737.16	747.75
Canadian Dollar	197.52	201.17
China Yuan	38.10	38.85
Danish Krone	43.35	43.75
Euro	318.55	322.17
Hong Kong Dollar	35.06	36.04
Indian Rupee	2.75	3.05
Japanese Yen	1.7121	1.8104
Kuwaiti Dinar	885.17	895.90
Malaysian Ringgit	67	67.85
New Zealand \$	157.64	161.65
Norwegians Krone	27.97	28.27
Omani Riyal	722.25	732.50
Qatari Riyal	75.04	75.95
Saudi Riyal	74.30	74.95
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	75.90	76.75
UK Pound Sterling	368.52	372.25
US Dollar	279.05	279.30

Mobilink Bank, Depilex Smileagain Foundation Empower Women Burn Survivors through Sustainable Mobility

Commerce Desk

LAHORE: Pakistan's leading digital micro-finance bank, Mobilink Bank, has launched a meaningful social investment initiative in collaboration with the Depilex Smileagain Foundation, providing 25 electric scooters to female survivors of acid and kerosene burn violence. Introduced under the Bank's CSR program, the initiative supports survivors in rebuilding independence, improving access to opportunities, and moving through daily life with greater confidence, dignity, and freedom.

Speaking on the occasion, Head of Strategy & Sustainability, Khowla Shoaib, said, "Women at DSF have shown immense strength in rebuilding their lives. While we cannot change what they have endured, we can help remove barriers that limit their independence,



Through sustainable mobility, Mobilink Bank is supporting greater access to education, employment, healthcare, and everyday opportunities, helping women move forward on their own terms."

Speaking at the ceremony, Musarrat Misbah, Founder and President of Depilex Smileagain Foundation, said, "At DSF, we believe true rehabilitation is about restoring independence and opportunity. Mobility is a critical part of that journey. Through this partnership with Mobilink Bank, women survivors will have greater freedom to access work, education, and everyday opportunities as they rebuild their lives with dignity."

Mobilink Bank's commitment to ESG-driven growth is reflected in its support for women entrepreneurs and underserved communities through inclusive financial services, capacity-building programs, and sustainability-focused initiatives designed to create meaningful and lasting impact. The bank's collaboration with Depilex Smileagain Foundation embodies this commitment by combining survivor rehabilitation with sustainable mobility, helping women rebuild their lives while advancing a more inclusive and environmentally responsible future.

Pindi also closed

ISLAMABAD: People walk past the closed bus terminal at Faizabad in the Federal Capital. All bus terminals operating in the capital were closed as a security measure in view of the Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian.



Photo: Online by Sultan Bashir

Saudia Receives 2026 APEX Best Cabin Service Award



Commerce Desk

KARACHI: Saudia, the national carrier of Saudi Arabia, won the 2026 APEX Award for Best Cabin Service in the Middle East at the ceremony in Dublin during Future Travel Experience EMEA.

The award is significant for Pakistan, one of Saudia's key markets serving growing religious, business and leisure

travel between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia.

APEX ratings use verified passenger feedback from over 1 million flights across 600+ airlines, judging cabin service, seat comfort, food & beverage, entertainment and Wi-Fi.

Rossen Dimitrov, Chief Guest Experience Officer, credited Saudia's cabin crew and service culture, saying it reflects

progress in delivering consistent "Saudi hospitality" globally.

The award follows Saudia's "New Saudia Experience" rollout and "Saudia BEYOND" training program to standardize hospitality. The recognition supports Saudia's strategy, Vision 2030 goals, and its commitment to high service standards across its international network, including Pakistan.

Saudi Investors Show Strong Interest in Pakistani Handmade Furniture, Seek Joint Ventures

Commerce Desk

LAHORE: Chief Executive officer Pakistan Furniture Council Mian Kashif Ashfaq (Tamgha -I-Imtiaz) Tuesday said Saudi investors are showing keen interest in Pak handmade carved furniture and exploring avenues for joint ventures, investment, and technology collaboration with local manufacturers.

According to a message received here today from Jeddah, six members PFC delegation led by its CEO is currently touring Saudi Arabia. He said Saudi counterparts highly praised the craftsmanship, quality, and intricate wood carving

skills of Pakistani artisans, particularly in the production of traditional and luxury furniture. They noted that Pakistani handmade furniture possesses strong potential in Gulf markets due to its unique designs, durability, and competitive pricing.

He said Pak Consul General Syed Mustafa Rabbani, Trade Development Officer Fahad Chaudhary and Consul for Investment and Trade Ms Saadia Khan facilitated for successful meeting and other members of delegation included Raja Safdar Khan, Ch Muhammad Afzal, Faisal Ch, Mati Ur Rasool and Anwar Ali.

CCP Approves Acquisition of BASF Pakistan by UAE's Kemyion Chemical Solutions

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP) has approved the acquisition of 100% shareholding of BASF Pakistan (Private) Limited by UAE-based Kemyion Chemical Solutions Trading FZCO following a Phase-I review under the Competition Act, 2010.

Kemyion submitted a pre-merger application under Section 11 of the Act to acquire the shares from German multinational BASF SE, pursuant to a Share Purchase Agreement signed on 18 November 2025. The Commission authorized the transaction under Section 31(1)(d)(i) after assessing its impact on competition.

Kemyion Chemical Solutions Trading FZCO trades in acids, alkalis, industrial and construction chemicals, insecticides, petrochemicals, and plastic/nylon raw materials. BASF Pakistan is engaged in indenting and merchandising chemicals including colorants, catalysts, solvents, oxo alcohols, and process chemicals.

The CCP identified the relevant market as the trade of specialty and industrial chemicals in Pakistan. It observed that Kemyion has no current operations, revenue or assets in Pakistan, so the deal will not cause any material change in market concentration. The combined market share of the parties will remain unchanged and insignificant.

The Commission concluded the acquisition would not create entry barriers or significantly enhance market power, and found no evidence it would substantially lessen competition or strengthen a dominant position.

The approval underscores CCP's commitment to facilitating investment through timely merger reviews while protecting competition, market efficiency and consumer welfare.

Nestlé and PCSIR Rally Stakeholders for Safer Food at Pakistan's World Food Safety Day 2026 Event

Commerce Desk

LAHORE: Nestlé Pakistan and PCSIR, with PSFST, Punjab University's Food Science Dept, and NUR International University, marked World Food Safety Day 2026 under the theme "From Burden to Solutions: Safe Food Everywhere."

Government, regulators, academia, industry and students joined to strengthen Pakistan's food safety ecosystem. Key participants included Dr. Kiran Khurshid, Secretary FS&CPD Punjab; Nestlé CEO Jason Avanceña; and

heads of Punjab, Sindh, Balochistan Food Authorities and PSQCA.

Discussions focused on food safety, quality, traceability, nutritional labelling and consumer information, emphasizing science-based, local solutions. Avanceña said food safety is Nestlé's "license to operate." Dr. Khurshid stressed collective action by govt, regulators, academia and industry.

Speakers highlighted research, enforcement, capacity building and awareness. Participants supported Codex-aligned, evidence-based front-of-pack labelling, citing PSFST's proposal with simple



nutrient indicators over warning labels, suited to Pakistan's context.

The event reaffirmed stakeholders' commitment to safe, high-

quality food and building a stronger national food safety culture.

Pakistan and Uzbekistan Pledge to Strengthen Ties in Education, Trade, and Connectivity

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of the Republic of Uzbekistan to Pakistan, H. E. Alisher Tukhtaev, called on Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives, Ahsan Iqbal, in Islamabad on Tuesday.

During the meeting, both sides discussed avenues for further strengthening bilateral cooperation in education, trade, economy, transport and communications, agriculture, and livestock development.

The discussions reflected the shared commitment of Pakistan and Uzbekistan to deepen their strategic partnership and enhance regional connectivity and economic integration.

The two sides also explored opportunities for expanding academic collaboration through joint research initiatives, student and faculty exchange programmes, and specialized capacity-building and training initiatives.

They deliberated on the possibility of joint accreditation of degree programmes to strengthen quality assurance mechanisms and enhance the international recognition of academic

qualifications.

Speaking on educational cooperation, Federal Minister Ahsan Iqbal highlighted the importance of promoting language learning and academic exchange.

He noted that Uzbekistan could serve as an important destination for Pakistani scholars seeking to learn the Russian language, which would enable greater access to scientific, technological, and research resources available in the region.

The meeting also focused on developments in the spiritual and educational spheres. Minister Ahsan Iqbal appreciated Uzbekistan's efforts in preserving and promoting Islamic heritage, particularly through landmark projects such as the restored Imam Al-Bukhari Complex in Samarkand and the Center for Islamic Civilization in Tashkent.

He observed that these initiatives have generated considerable interest in Pakistan and offer valuable opportunities for cultural and educational cooperation.

Both sides discussed the possibility of collaboration between Pakistan and Uzbekistan for the produc-

tion of a multi-episode historical drama depicting the life and legacy of Zahir-ud-Din Muhammad Babur, aimed at highlighting the shared historical and cultural heritage of the region.

The Federal Minister reaffirmed Pakistan's strong ties with Uzbekistan, describing it as a second homeland and one of Pakistan's most important partners in Central Asia. He emphasized the deep-rooted historical, cultural, and people-to-people connections between the two countries and expressed Pakistan's desire to further expand bilateral cooperation across diverse sectors.

The meeting also reviewed prospects for enhancing air connectivity, including support for the existing Tashkent-Lahore route and proposals for launching direct flights between Karachi and major cities of Uzbekistan to facilitate tourism, business, and people-to-people exchanges.

Ambassador Alisher Tukhtaev appreciated Pakistan's constructive role in promoting regional peace and stability and congratulated the leadership of Pakistan, including Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, and the Government of



Pakistan, for their efforts in supporting dialogue and diplomatic engagement aimed at easing regional tensions and fostering peaceful solutions to interna-

tional challenges.

The meeting concluded with both sides reaffirming their commitment to further strengthening Pakistan-Uz-

zbekistan relations and translating the shared vision of regional connectivity, economic cooperation, and cultural understanding into tangible outcomes.

Regional Inter District U-19 (Karachi Region) One Day Cricket League Tournament

2nd Consecutive Century 157 by Huzaifa Ahsan, Centuries by Aun Abbas 132, Muhammad Akbar 106 and Syed Murtaza 101

KARACHI: Three more matches decided in the 3rd round of the Regional Inter District Under-19 (Karachi Region) Cricket Tournament held at various Grounds of the City.

The highlights of the days play was another Brilliant Century 157 by Huzaifa Ahsan, Centuries 132 by Aun Abbas, Muhammad Akbar 106 and Syed Murtaza 101. Deadly bowling by right arm leg spinner Asadullah 6/45, Huzaifa Bin Sajid 4/25 and Armanullah 4/54.

The Tournament is being Organized by Pakistan Cricket Board.

Scores in Brief:

At KCCA Stadium Zone-VI defeated Zone-II in their

2nd Match by 99 runs. Zone-VI 293/3 in 50 overs. Huzaifa Ahsan 157 19x4 3x6, Muhammad Azaan 62 4x4 1x6 not out Abdul Sami 50 4x4 1x6.

In reply Zone-II 194/9 in 50 overs. Zain Ali Jaffri 58 6x4, Muhammad Harris 57 7x4, Aliyan Asif 22. Zaryab Shah 2/56.



At UBL Sports Complex Zone-IV beat Zone-V by 132 runs in their 2nd Match. Zone-IV 341/5 in 50 overs. Aun Abbas 132 16x4 1x6, Syed Murtaza 101 9x4 3x6 (both added record 226 runs for the opening wicket partnership),

M. Bilal 32, M. Daniyal Khan Niazi 28. In reply Zone-V 209/9 in 50 overs. Muhammad Akbar 106 14x4 not out, Majid Ali 27, Saad Khan 21. Huzaifa Bin Sajid 4/25, Muhammad Masham Hussain Siddiqui 3/40.

At Eid Gah Ground Korangi Zone-III beat Zone-VII by 36 runs. Zone-III 256/8 in 50 overs. Muhammad Hassan 85 8x4 1x6, Aman Ahmed 71 11x4, Asadullah Khan 34, Anas Balouch 28. Arman-

ullah 4/54. In reply Zone-VII 220 all out in 46.4 overs. Sahil 72 10x4 2x6, Riaz Ahmed 64 5x4 not out, Adil Hussain 28. Asadullah Khan (rlb) 6/45 Fixture 30th June

1) Zone-I vs Zone-IV at Eid Gah Ground. 2) Zone-II vs Zone-III at UBL Sports Complex 3) Zone-VI vs Zone-VII at KCCA Stadium.

DG Sports Punjab inaugurates Sports Board Punjab's special diet programme for women hockey players

LAHORE: Director General Sports Punjab Muhammad Tariq Qureshi has inaugurated the Sports Board Punjab's special diet programme for women hockey players at the National Hockey Stadium on Tuesday.

Deputy Director Zahoor Ahmed, former female hockey player Sehrish Ghuman and other officials were also present at the launch ceremony. Director General Sports Punjab Muhammad Tariq Qureshi was introduced to the women hockey players. He also distributed fruits, milk, and other nutritional items among the female hockey players.

Speaking on the occasion, Director General Sports Punjab Muhammad Tariq Qureshi said that Sports Board Punjab has launched this special diet programme with an aim to improve the health and fitness of women hockey players across the province. "Under the initiative, essential nutritional items will be provided to female athletes on a daily basis to support their physical development and enhance their sporting performance."

Director General Sports Punjab Muhammad Tariq Qureshi further said that physical fitness is essential

for athletes to demonstrate satisfactory performance in the field. "A healthy and balanced diet is a key factor in achieving and maintaining fitness."

Director General Sports Punjab Muhammad Tariq Qureshi said that several female hockey players come from middle and lower middle class families and may not always have access to the adequate nutrition. "The provision of fruits, milk, and other essential food items would contribute significantly to the players' growth, health, and overall well-being."

Director General Sports Punjab



Muhammad Tariq Qureshi further said that stronger and healthier athletes will naturally perform better in the field. "This initiative reflects Sports Board Punjab's commitment to supporting and developing women's sports in the province."

Pezeshkian says Pakistan visit aims to cement US-Iran agreement

Continued from Page 1

He stressed that Tehran seeks full and practical implementation of the signed agreement, saying it should be operationalised in a way that safeguards Iran's interests and rights.

Pezeshkian added that the implementation of the memorandum could help reduce regional tensions and contribute to stability in the Middle East amid ongoing conflicts and continued aggression by Israel against Islamic countries.

He said the agreement includes provisions aimed at preventing

further escalation and expressed hope it would lead to lasting regional security and limit the actions of aggressor states.

The Iranian president also said discussions during the visit would cover a broad range of areas, including trade, economic cooperation, cultural exchanges, and security and defence ties.

He added that strengthening relations between Iran and Pakistan, as well as other regional countries, including Turkey, Qatar and Saudi Arabia, remains a key priority in line with broader policy guidance from Iran's leadership.

Restoring Normalcy in Azad Kashmir: Rejecting Disruption for the Sake of the People

Continued from Page 4

Rawalakot highlights localized pockets of resistance, yet even there the broader trend points toward stabilization. Elections offer a structured avenue to address grievances through representation rather than through indefinite shutdowns that erode public confidence.

Azad Kashmir's people have historically valued stability and incremental progress over imported slogans or disruptive experiments. When external actors or hidden interests attempt to hijack local platforms, the result is rarely empowerment and often prolonged hardship. The current moment offers an opportunity to reaffirm that governance and welfare are best advanced through institutions, elections, and dialogue rather than indefinite shutdowns. Economic

indicators already reflect the benefits of returning normalcy, with reopened shops and resumed transport services easing daily burdens on households.

Moving forward, all stakeholders must prioritize de-escalation. Outlawed groups that have lost public legitimacy should not be permitted to derail the return to routine. At the same time, legitimate grievances deserve structured channels for redress rather than being allowed to fester into cycles of protest and crackdown. The government's demonstrated restraint provides a foundation; it must now be matched by responsible behavior from political actors who genuinely seek the region's betterment. Civil society organizations can play a vital role in fostering community-level reconciliation and monitoring any resurgence of divi-

sive tactics.

Ultimately, the people of Azad Kashmir have made their preference clear by resuming daily life and engaging with the electoral process. They have seen through attempts to prolong disruption under the guise of advocacy. The path ahead lies in rejecting third-party agendas, restoring full normalcy, and focusing collective energy on development, employment, and services that directly improve lives. Only then can the sacrifices of recent weeks translate into lasting stability rather than repeated cycles of unrest. Continued vigilance against infiltration and a commitment to inclusive, constitutional dialogue will ensure that Azad Kashmir emerges stronger and more united.

The writer is a JK based journalist and can be reached at: asamad@gmail.com

Israel Versus Iran: Before and After the War

Continued from Page 4

frustration with permanent war have deepened. A state cannot live forever in emergency mode. A society cannot remain healthy if every political problem is answered with bombs, raids, assassinations, occupations, and blockades.

Israel's deeper problem is not military. It is political and moral. For decades, Israel has avoided the central question: how can it live permanently in a region whose people it refuses to treat as equal stakeholders in peace? It cannot normalize its future while denying Palestinians their rights. It cannot bomb Lebanon into friendship. It cannot assassinate its way into legitimacy. It cannot occupy territory and expect acceptance. It cannot treat Iran as a ghost to be destroyed rather than a regional power to be engaged.

The path forward is obvious, but Israel's leadership refuses to see it. Israel must start behaving like a normal country. A normal country builds relations with neighbors. A normal country respects borders. A normal

country understands that military power has limits. A normal country negotiates, compromises, and recognizes that security cannot be built only on domination.

If Israel accepted a genuine two-state solution, respected Palestinian rights, withdrew from occupied territories, ended reckless military adventurism, and engaged the region through diplomacy, the Middle East could enter a new era of prosperity. Trade, technology, energy cooperation, reconstruction, and regional connectivity could replace permanent war.

But if Israel continues to live inside a narcissistic illusion that it is divinely entitled to dominate the region regardless of law, geography, demography, or diplomacy, then harder days lie ahead.

The war has already established one point beyond dispute: Iran cannot be ignored. It cannot be erased. It cannot be conquered by airstrikes. It must be treated as a central regional power whose interests must be addressed in any durable settlement.

Before the war, Israel appeared to be the

unquestioned regional hegemon and Iran the besieged adversary. After the war, Israel looks more vulnerable, more isolated, and more dependent on a United States that is now pursuing its own direct path with Tehran. Iran, meanwhile, has emerged as a necessary participant in the future architecture of the Middle East.

That is the real before-and-after story. The war did not merely test missiles and drones. It tested illusions. It revealed that American backing is not destiny, military superiority is not permanent security, and regional arrogance cannot substitute for diplomacy. Israel's age of unquestioned dominance is fading. A new Middle East is emerging, and Israel must either adjust to it—or be crushed by the consequences of refusing to live like a normal state among normal neighbors.

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

Meeting

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari in a meeting with President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Dr. Masoud Pezeshkian, at Aiwan-e-Sadr on Tuesday.



Photo: PID

President Zardari reaffirms principled support for Iran's peace, stability, sovereignty

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari on Tuesday reaffirmed Pakistan's principled support for Iran's peace, stability, national unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity. Meeting Iranian President Dr. Masoud Pezeshkian at Aiwan-e-Sadr, he said Pakistan consistently

opposes one-sided initiatives and backs dialogue and diplomacy for durable solutions to regional and global challenges.

He also underscored Pakistan's commitment to Muslim Ummah unity and strong fraternal ties with Gulf countries.

The two leaders discussed bilateral relations, regional

peace and security, connectivity, economic cooperation and other mutual issues.

President Zardari welcomed Pezeshkian on his first post-conflict state visit, noting it reflected long-standing brotherly relations.

He congratulated him on the Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding and hoped ongoing technical

talks would bring permanent regional peace. Zardari also expressed condolences on Ali Hosseini Khamenei's martyrdom and said Pakistan would join his funeral.

President Pezeshkian thanked Pakistan for its constructive peace efforts and support during recent challenges, saying Iran values ties with Pakistan

and seeks expanded cooperation in political, economic, security and regional areas. Zardari asked him to convey regards to Supreme Leader Ayatollah Seyed Mojtaba Hosseini Khamenei.

The meeting was attended by Ishaq Dar, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, Mohsin Naqvi and senior officials from both sides.

Iran Praises Pakistan's Mediation Role in High-Level Talks with Field Marshal



City Desk

RAWALPINDI: Chief of Army Staff (COAS) and Chief of Defence Forces (CDF), Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), HJ called on the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Dr. Masoud Pezeshkian, during which views on regional developments and peace initiatives were exchanged.

"The Iranian President appreciated Pakistan's constructive and responsible role in promoting dialogue, de-escalation, and regional stability. He acknowledged Pakistan's consistent efforts to encourage peaceful resolution of

disputes and foster understanding among regional stakeholders at a time of heightened geopolitical challenges", said a news release issued by Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR).

Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir reiterated Pakistan's unwavering commitment to peace and stability in the region.

Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to further strengthening Pakistan-Iran relations and maintaining close consultations on issues of mutual interest, with the shared objective of advancing peace, prosperity and stability across the region, the news release said.

Khawaja Asif rejects criticism, reaffirms Pakistan's unwavering commitment to Kashmir

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Defence, Khawaja Muhammad Asif on Tuesday said that his remarks about the situation in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) were made with honesty and sincerity, asserting that no propaganda or vested interests could weaken the historic and emotional bond between Pakistan and Kashmir.

"My remarks about the crisis in AJK were frank and honest, Alhamdulillah. Those who have sinister agendas may try to twist them but they cannot take Kashmir out of me or out from Pakistan or take Pakistan out of Kashmir," he wrote on social media platform X.

He said that the sacrifices of Kashmiris who crossed over into Pakistan in October 1947 were recorded in history, etched in their memory forever.

"The struggle of Kashmiris in Indi-



an-Occupied Kashmir against Indian occupation is a saga of martyrdom and lives spent in jails over the last 78 years. Pakistan's commitment to the Kashmir cause is witnessed in the blood of our martyrs in five wars, and in our principled stand on a plebiscite and self determination as per UN resolutions," he said.

PAF Fighter Jets give aerial salute to Iranian President Dr. Masoud Pezeshkian

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Air Force (PAF) fighter jets accorded a spectacular aerial welcome to Iranian President Dr. Masoud Pezeshkian upon his arrival in Pakistan on an official visit.

As the Iranian President's aircraft entered Pakistani airspace, it was received by a special PAF escort squadron.

A six-aircraft formation comprising JF-17 Thunder and F-16 fighter jets accompanied the presidential aircraft, offering a ceremonial salute in honor of the



distinguished guest.

The formation leader conveyed the good wishes of the Prime Minister of Pakistan and the people of Pakistan to President Pezeshkian.

The traditional aerial escort arranged by the Pakistan Air Force highlighted the country's longstanding hospitality and respect for visiting heads of state.

The participation of JF-17 Thunder and F-16 aircraft also showcased the modern operational capabilities and professionalism of the Pakistan Air Force.

PM promoting political reconciliation, new democratic traditions: Khawaja Asif

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Federal Defence Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif on Tuesday said that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif was setting new democratic traditions and promoting a culture of political dialogue and

reconciliation.

Speaking on the floor of the National Assembly, he urged the opposition to embrace these traditions, adding that the prime minister had introduced a new political environment not only in Parliament but across the country.

Khawaja Asif said Prime Minister

Shehbaz Sharif and Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir had jointly enhanced Pakistan's prestige and dignity at both national and international levels.

He urged all members of the House to acknowledge their contributions without political prejudice.

The minister called on lawmakers

to adopt a balanced approach when criticising political opponents and to reflect on mistakes made during their own tenures in office.

He said the Leader of the House was making efforts to build political consensus and strengthen democratic norms.

IPP to fully participate in AJK elections

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party (IPP) has decided to fully participate in the upcoming elections of Azad Kashmir and has initiated the process of finalizing its election preparations and strategy.

In this regard, an important consultative meeting was held attended by Secretary General of Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party Mian Khalid Mehmood, Punjab President Rana Nazir Ahmad Khan and other Central and Provincial leaders.

Detailed discussions were held on the electoral landscape of Azad Kashmir and Punjab's 12 seats including organizational matters, selection of



candidates and various aspects of the election campaign.

During the meeting, comprehensive recommendations were prepared and submitted to President Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party Abdul

Alem Khan for approval and further policy direction. The participants of the meeting expressed their resolve that the IPP would field its candidates in the Azad Kashmir elections and present a posi-

tive, constructive and people-friendly political leadership to the public.

It was also decided that strong, capable and publicly supported candidates will be nominated for the 12 seats of Punjab. The party leadership of IPP directed all organizational wings, including the Women's Wing to further intensify their activities for the Azad Kashmir elections and to strengthen public outreach campaigns in an effective manner.

While addressing the meeting, IPP Secretary General Mian Khalid Mehmood and Punjab President Rana Nazir Ahmad Khan said that after the party's notable success in Gilgit-Bal-

tistan, a similar strong performance would now be seen in the valleys of Kashmir. They stated that people across the country are expressing confidence in the party's manifesto, leadership and vision of public service.

The leaders further said that success in the Azad Kashmir elections would strengthen the Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party and help transform it into a truly nationwide political force.

The meeting also expressed full confidence in the leadership of Party President Abdul Alem Khan and unanimously passed a resolution congratulating the party on its recent political achievements in Gilgit Baltistan.

Pak-Russian JWG discusses terrorism threat emanating from Afghanistan

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan-Russia Joint Working Group to Counter International Terrorism, Tuesday, discussed the regional terrorism threat, with particular focus on terrorism emanating from Afghanistan and the risk it posed to the neighboring states and the broader regional security.

The 12th meeting of the JWG was held in Islamabad. Additional Secretary (Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

Ambassador Muhammad Khalid Khan Jamali and Russian Federation Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs Dmitry Lyubinsky led the dialogue, the Foreign Office Spokesperson said in a press release.

The delegations also reviewed the state of bilateral cooperation on counterterrorism and identified avenues for deepening engagement at regional and international forums especially the United Nations (UN) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).

Pakistan to Save \$3.24 Billion by Converting Jamshoro Plant to Indigenous Thar Coal

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan will save USD 3.239 billion over 26 years, including USD 2.113 billion in foreign currency, by converting Jamshoro Unit-01 from imported coal to 100% indigenous Thar lignite. A Bankable Feasibility Study by Dornier Group and EY Parthenon confirms the project is technically feasible, economically viable, and environmentally manageable.

Presented to Power Minister Sardar Awaiz Leghari, the study shows a 1.8x cost-benefit ratio with USD 1.720 billion net benefits to the power sector and USD 1.519 billion

in government savings from lower foreign borrowing costs. Conversion CAPEX is USD 86.2 million out of USD 116.6 million total cost.

The ultra-supercritical plant can switch to Thar coal via targeted modifications, not a full boiler retrofit. The shift will expand Tharparkar mines, create jobs, and reduce dependence on volatile imported coal.

With BFS complete, the Energy Ministry will now seek policy approval, lender consent, regulatory clearances from NEPRA/SEPA/PPRA, and launch design/procurement tenders. The project aligns with the PM's Power Sector Reform Plan for energy indigenisation and security.