



# Islamabad POST

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**Uzbekistan, Pakistan deepen bilateral bonds, says envoy**

Detailed News On Page-01

**Trump deploys Marines as tensions rise**

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**Pak's UN envoy delighted at Sana achievement**

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## Budget FY 2026

# Govt eyes 4.2% GDP growth, relief for salaried class

Slashes overall spending; Defence allocation up by a steep 20 per cent; finance czar says country expecting \$71bn in cash flows, \$7bn in taxes; total budget outlay Rs17.573tr.

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Finance and Revenue Muhammad Aurangzeb on Tuesday presented the federal budget for fiscal year 2025-26 with a total outlay of Rs17.57 trillion, setting a 4.2% GDP growth target and announcing relief measures for the salaried class while overall federal expenditure being slashed by 7%. The budget session was held under the chairmanship of NA Speaker Ayaz Sadiq amid opposition lawmakers protest. Aurangzeb said he was honoured to present second budget for the incumbent government. He thanked Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari, Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui and others for their support in the budget. Speaking on the NA floor, the finance minister said the federal budget being presented at an "extremely important and historic moment," while praising national unity during recent tensions with India. "This budget comes at a pivotal time for our nation's future," he said, commending the country's military and political leadership for their "successful handling of recent war-like situation" with India.

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## Budget falls short of expectations: RCCI

STAFF REPORT

RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) has termed the recently announced federal budget as traditional and controlled rather than balanced, stating that it falls short of the business community's expectations. In a press conference, RCCI President Usman Shaukat, accompanied by Group Leader Sohail Altaf, office bearers, representatives of the Tax Bar Association, and local trader associations, stated that the budget lacked meaningful measures to boost exports, reduce the cost of doing business, bring down energy prices, or offer significant tax relief. President Shaukat remarked that while early consultations were a welcome initiative this year, the proposals submitted by RCCI were either largely

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## NATIONAL DAY OF RUSSIA



ISLAMABAD: Chief Guest Asif Ali Zardari, President of Pakistan, Ambassador of the Russian Federation Albert P Khorev and others cutting cake to celebrate the National Day of Russia. – DNA

## Extensive heatwave to continue till June 12

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) on Tuesday urged the public to remain vigilant and avoid stepping out between 11 am and 5 pm as a severe heatwave continues to grip Punjab and other parts of the country. The heatwave is expected to persist until June 12. PDMA Spokesperson talking to a

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## UK, other nations sanction two far-right Israeli ministers

NEWS DESK

LONDON: The UK, Australia, Canada, New Zealand and Norway on Tuesday announced sanctions against two Israeli ministers for "repeated incitements of violence against Palestinian communities", they said in a joint statement. Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich and National Security Minister Itamar Ben Gvir will be subject to a travel ban and an asset freeze, the UK foreign ministry said in a statement.

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## Russian National Day

# Pakistan considers Russia as a major global power: Zardari

President Asif Ali Zardari Extends Congratulations to Russia on its 35th National Day

A.M.BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: On the occasion of the 35th National Day of the Russian Federation, President of Pakistan Asif Ali Zardari extended warm greetings to President Vladimir Putin, the Russian Ambassador in Islamabad, and the people of Russia. In his speech, President Zardari said Pakistan joins in celebrating the joy of Russia's National Day, reflecting the friendly and growing ties between the two nations. He noted that Pakistan-Russia relations have steadily improved over the past years, based on mutual respect, cooperation, and shared interests across various sectors. "High-level engagements between the two countries have increased in recent times, laying a strong foundation of understanding and trust," the President stated, adding that these developments signify the deepening of bilateral relations. President Zardari further emphasized that Pakistan and Russia continue to maintain close cooperation on regional and global platforms, underscoring Pakistan's recognition of Russia as a major global power. He acknowledged Russia's key role in ensuring regional peace and stability in the Eurasian region, highlighting its importance as a strategic partner. Referring to a recent meeting between Special Assistant to the Prime Minister Tariq Fatemi and Russian Foreign Minister in Moscow, the President described it as

"highly encouraging." He said both sides stressed the importance of regional peace and stability during their discussions. President Zardari expressed confidence that the bonds of friendship between Pakistan and Russia would grow stronger, pointing out the immense potential for expanding cooperation in trade, investment, technology, and people-to-people contacts. "Let us renew our commitment to fostering greater understanding and collaboration between Pakistan and Russia," he urged. "Long live Pakistan-Russia friendship," President Zardari concluded. Earlier, in his welcome address, Ambassador Albert Khorev emphasized that Russia remains a sovereign, powerful, and resilient nation, driven by the unwavering support of its people. Reflecting on the words of President Vladimir Putin, the Ambassador noted that Russia has historically played a unifying role in the region, stretching "from the Baltics to the Caucasus." Highlighting the steady progress in Pak-Russia relations, Ambassador Khorev stated that bilateral cooperation is advancing at a satisfactory pace across various sectors. He expressed appreciation for Pakistan's growing interest in Russian language and culture. "We commend the Pakistani enthusiasm for learning the Russian language," he remarked. "The Russian Mission is actively supporting the establishment and expansion of language learning institutions

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## Briefs

### Iran says talks planned for Sunday

Trump earlier said the meeting with Iran was expected on Thursday

DNA

TEHRAN: Iran said a new round of nuclear talks with the United States is planned for Sunday, after Washington submitted a proposal for a deal amid a standoff over uranium enrichment. The longtime foes have held five rounds of talks since April, the highest-level contact since President Donald Trump withdrew Washington from a 2015 nuclear accord during his first term. "The next round of Iran-US indirect talks is being planned for next Sunday in Muscat," Iran's Foreign Ministry Spokesman Esmail Baqaei said in a statement on Tuesday. Trump had earlier said the meeting with Iran was expected on Thursday but Baqaei noted that Iran's Foreign Minister and Chief Negotiator Abbas Araghchi would be attending the Norway's Oslo Forum, a gathering of conflict mediators

### 10 more inmates return to Malir prison

Prisoner return count hits 149 while 66 still remain at large

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Authorities confirmed on Tuesday that at least 10 more prisoners – who had escaped during a jailbreak triggered by an earthquake in the port city – have returned to Landhi Jail in Malir district over the three days of Eid ul Adha. At least 213 inmates escaped from Karachi's District Malir Jail during an earthquake-related evacuation. The incident reportedly occurred when tremors prompted prison staff to move inmates into the open courtyard for safety. However, during the commotion, the situation spiralled out of control, enabling hundreds to break free. According to Jail Superintendent Shahab Siddiqui, some prisoners were arrested, while some returned voluntarily.

## Slams opposition 'negative' stance

# PM wanted budget to be relief-oriented: Tarar

The minister recalled that the country was on the verge of default in 2022 but now due to prudent policies of the present regime, it witnessed economic stability

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaulah Tarar on Tuesday expressed optimism about federal budget for the next fiscal year is relief-oriented. Talking to media informally before the cabinet meeting for approval of the budget 2025-26, he said Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has always talked about providing relief to the people. To a question, he said that the opposition played a good role during the Indian aggression in the recent past. He said they should also adopt a constructive approach on economic issues. He said that he was disappointed over opposition's press conference. The minister said the opposition did not have economic data, so they were making personal attacks. "They have nothing to criticize in the budget, so they are looking for various excuses", Attaulah Tarar maintained.

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## ICCI gives mixed response, applauds construction incentives

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) has termed the federal budget 2025-26 as largely inspiring, welcoming several positive initiatives particularly for the construction sector, which drives nearly 50 allied industries and plays a pivotal role in employment generation and tax revenue. Addressing a well-attended press conference at

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# Stronger together: Uzbekistan, Pak deepen bonds

Exclusive Interview with H.E. Alisher Tuktaev, Ambassador of Uzbekistan to Pakistan

*In an exclusive conversation with Islamabad POST, Centreline magazine, and DNA News Agency, the Ambassador of Uzbekistan to Pakistan, His Excellency Alisher Tuktaev, shared valuable insights into the strengthening relationship between Pakistan and Uzbekistan. Here is the first part of his interview.*

## Exclusive

ANSAR MAHMOOD BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Reflecting on the recent visit of Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif to Uzbekistan, Ambassador Tuktaev hailed it as a significant step in enhancing bilateral relations. "The visit marked an important milestone in the development of our strategic partnership," he said. According to the Ambassador, the relations between Uzbekistan and Pakistan are currently on a positive trajectory, with notable advancements in political dialogue, economic collaboration, and people-to-people ties. Key achievements include progress in trade and transport sectors, particularly the ambitious goal to increase bilateral trade to \$2 billion and the advancement of the Uzbekistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan railway project. The visit also highlighted mutual interests in strengthening cooperation in agriculture, tourism, investment, and cultural exchanges. Discussing the trade target of \$2 billion, Ambassador Tuktaev emphasized the practical measures being taken to reach this milestone. "This is an ambitious yet realistic goal," he said. To achieve this, the Uzbekistan-Pakistan Joint Intergov-

ernmental Commission on Trade and Economic Cooperation has ramped up its efforts. Business-to-business interaction is being promoted through trade forums, exhibitions, and delegation visits. The sectors expected to lead this surge include textiles, light industry, pharmaceuticals, agro-processing, construction materials, chemicals, IT, and communications. There is also a concerted push to resolve logistical challenges, expand the Preferential Trade Agreement, and simplify customs procedures. Furthermore, new avenues of cooperation are emerging in energy, mechanical engineering, and mining, all of which will be underpinned by strong political will and growing business interest on both sides. One of the most transformative projects discussed during the Prime Minister's visit was the Uzbekistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan railway. Ambassador Tuktaev called it a "strategic initiative" that could reshape regional connectivity by providing the shortest and most economical route from Central Asia to the Arabian Sea. Currently, the project is in the technical planning and preparation phase. A trilateral roadmap has been signed, and a feasibility study is underway, with support being sought from international financial institutions. The 760-kilometer railway is expected to cut cargo delivery times from Tashkent to Pakistani ports from over 30 days to just 10-12 days and reduce costs by up to 35%. "This is more than just an infrastructure project," said the Ambassador. "It is a symbol of regional connectivity, pragmatic cooperation, and a shared com-



mitment to a peaceful future." Beyond economic and political collaboration, cultural and educational initiatives are gaining momentum. Ambassador Tuktaev underscored the deep historical and spiritual connections between the two nations, highlighting the legacies of figures like Imam al-Bukhari, Imam al-Tirmidhi, Al-Biruni, and Babur. New initiatives include expanding academic exchanges, creating joint educational programs, and establishing university partnerships. Plans are also in motion for reciprocal university branches, cultural centers, art exhibitions, and student exchange programs. "We are promoting the study of Uzbek and Urdu languages, and launching youth dialogues and forums," he noted. Joint projects in Islamic education and historical research further cement the cultural



alliance between the two countries. Ambassador Tuktaev acknowledged the complex regional security landscape, particularly in the context of Afghanistan. He reaffirmed Uzbekistan's commitment to close coordination with Pakistan in areas like counterterrorism, drug trafficking, and cybersecurity. "Our countries already share a history of positive collaboration in defense and security," he stated, adding that new legal frameworks are being developed to bolster these ties. Joint training, capacity building, and information sharing are central to this cooperation. Uzbekistan maintains a policy of non-alignment but strongly advocates for regional dialogue, political conflict resolution, and trust-building. Within forums such as the UN, SCO, OIC, and ECO, both nations continue to work to-

gether to promote peace and stability across South and Central Asia. Ambassador Tuktaev highlighted Uzbekistan's position as one of Central Asia's most dynamic economies and a welcoming destination for Pakistani investors. He pointed out that Uzbekistan has introduced wide-ranging reforms to liberalize its investment climate, including currency policy reforms, investor protections, and simplified business procedures via a "Single Window" system. Key sectors for Pakistani investment include textiles, food processing, pharmaceuticals, construction, logistics, and tourism. Uzbekistan's Free Economic Zones – including Navoi, Angren, and Jizzakh – offer further incentives for joint ventures and industrial development. Joint projects are already underway in pharmaceuticals, textiles, and agriculture. "We actively support direct B2B engagements through forums, exhibitions, and delegation exchanges," said the Ambassador. The Embassy of Uzbekistan in Islamabad is committed to providing full support to Pakistani investors, from project planning to execution. Ambassador Alisher Tuktaev said "With our shared vision, geographic proximity, historical ties, and mutual trust, the future of Pakistan-Uzbekistan relations is very bright." The multifaceted cooperation – spanning politics, trade, connectivity, culture, security, and education – reflects a comprehensive and forward-looking partnership. Both nations are poised to benefit from deeper ties, and as the Ambassador aptly stated, "We are stronger together."



# CM applauds record Eid clean-up operation

The CM also announced a special reward of Rs 10,000 for each employee of the Waste Management Companies who worked diligently throughout the Eid holidays

## DNA

LAHORE:On the direction of Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif, a mega clean-up operation on Eid-ul-Azha has been successfully completed across Punjab Over the past three days, a record 315,669 tonnes of offals were collected throughout the province. This represents a 74 percent increase in offal and waste collection compared to the previous Eid-ul-Azha across Punjab's 9 divisions. Lahore recorded the highest volume with 78,771 tonnes, followed by Gujranwala with 39,290 tonnes, and Faisalabad with 38,050 tonnes. Other notable figures include Multan (36,361 tonnes), Bahawalpur (31,735 tonnes), Sargodha (26,136 tonnes), Rawalpindi (25,889 tonnes), Sahiwal (20,821 tonnes), and Dera Ghazi Khan (18,616 tonnes). To ensure effective sanitation, the

operation involved the use of 143,429 litres of phenyl, 30,563 litres of rose water, and the application of 2,987,268 kilograms of lime across roads and public areas.

Additionally, the Punjab government distributed over 11.97 million free waste collection bags to facilitate proper disposal. A total of 1,684 designated altars, 816 dumping sites, and 3,970 union council camps were established to support the smooth execution of the clean-up operation. Out of 12,000 complaints received from the public, 11,880 were resolved promptly, reflecting the efficiency and responsiveness of the sanitation teams. In some areas, offal collection exceeded estimates, while in others it remained slightly below projections. Nevertheless, Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif praised all institutions involved for surpassing previous performance records set during last year's Eid-ul-Azha. The CM also an-

nounced a special reward of Rs 10,000 for each employee of the Waste Management Companies who worked diligently throughout the Eid holidays. Moreover, With the start of new fiscal year 2025-26, work on new development projects will be started in 66 cities across the province. According to Planning & Development (P&D) sources, following the development vision of Punjab Chief Minister (CM) Maryam Nawaz, in the next phase of this program, 110 more cities will also be included in the development scope, so that urban life can be improved and standardized across the province. P&D sources while discussing a document on the Cities Development Program, said that on the instructions of Punjab Chief Minister (CM) Maryam Nawaz, provision of basic facilities was being ensured in all cities. Giving the detail they said that these projects include repair of communication roads, installation of modern sewage systems and use of lined sewage pipes that are effective for 100 years.



ISLAMABAD: A large number of youngsters enjoy bathing in Rawal Lake spillway water to get some relief from hot weather in the Federal Capital.

## Eid sanitation praised, Khattak demands same cleanliness year-long

RAWALPINDI: Commissioner Rawalpindi Engineer Amir Khattak while expressing satisfaction on effective cleanliness arrangements for Eidul Azha on Tuesday directed to maintain such high standards of sanitation throughout the year. He was chairing a meeting of Divisional Coordination Committee, which was attended by the Additional Commissioner Coordination, and officers of the Rawalpindi Waste Management Company and other departments.

It was noted that excellent sanitation and cleanliness arrangements were witnessed during all three days of Eid, and decided to hold a follow-up meeting in this regard soon. Commissioner Khattak observed that sanitation and cleanliness should be a permanent priority of the administration as it was not a temporary requirement. He directed that the sanitation campaign should be further intensified at the village level, and tehsil level control rooms should be linked to the Deputy Commissioner Office. He further directed that all ongoing development schemes should be reviewed immediately, while the new ones should be finalized and submitted by tomorrow (Wednesday). The uplift projects, he said, should be implemented as soon as possible.—APP

## Collective projects to be included in budget for public welfare: Bugti

QUETTA: Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti on Tuesday said that collective schemes would be included in the budget for the next financial year 2025-26 so that public welfare could be given priority. He said this while presiding over a consultative meeting of the parliamentary committee on the formulation of the budget for the next financial year 2025-26 at the Chief Minister Secretariat here. The meeting was attended by parliamentary leaders and members of the government's coalition parties. Addressing the meeting, Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Sarfraz Bugti said that the available resources would be utilized for public interest projects so that new avenues of development could be opened in the province. He expressed his determination that 100 percent allocation of the proposed projects would be ensured so that financial resources could be used properly and the development needs of the people can be met. He said that not only the provision of basic facilities to be ensured through the budget, but also full attention would be paid to development projects according to the priorities of the government.—APP

## Malaysian delegation visits flood-hit villages in Shaheed Benazir Abad

## DNA

NAWABSHAH: A high-level delegation from Iltizam Relief Society Malaysia including CEO Mohammad Shah Sapiei, Shahru Country Manager Pakistan and Noritta Hassan arrived in Pakistan for an official humanitarian visit. During the visit, the delegation toured the flood-affected villages of Suleman Likhi Tehsil Sakrand and Adam Gupchani, Tehsil Daur in the Shaheed Benazir Abad district.

The delegation inspected the houses constructed through their earlier provided aid for flood victims and conducted a detailed

quality assessment of the structures. The visit was coordinated by partner organization NDF Pakistan, the Program Manager Tariq Husain Channar provided a comprehensive briefing throughout the tour of all project sites. Speaking to the media, Muhsammad Shah Sapiei and Shahru expressed their commitment to long-term support for the affected communities. "Our mission is not just to deliver aid, but to uplift the quality of life for these people," they added. While the construction quality of the houses is satisfactory, there is still a need for additional essential services," they said.

They emphasized the need for clean drinking water, education, healthcare, and employment opportunities in the visited areas. The delegation also expressed their satisfaction with the work carried out by NDF and affirmed their willingness to continue collaborating on future initiatives. "We are highly impressed with NDF's efforts and look forward to deepening our partnership to serve humanity further," they added. Local villagers expressed their gratitude to Iltizam Relief Society Malaysia and NDF for their valuable contributions and ongoing support in rebuilding lives post-disaster.

## Chief Secretary reviews steps to tackle monsoon

QUETTA: Balochistan Chief Secretary (CS) Shakeel Qadir Khan on Tuesday chaired a meeting regarding monsoon to review preparations for the forecast of 2025 monsoon. The main objective of the meeting is to mobilize all relevant institutions and deal with the possible challenges of the monsoon under a coordinated strategy. Secretary Irrigation Hafiz Abdul Majid, DG PDMA, while all Divisional Commissioners and Deputy Commissioners participated in the meeting through video link.

In the meeting, all Deputy Commissioners were informed about the preparations made in their respective districts regarding the monsoon

and the problems being faced. Addressing the meeting, the Chief Secretary said that all Commissioners should be immediately ready to deal with any situation with all officers and staff in the respective divisions regarding the monsoon rains and the relevant institutions should keep their machinery ready so that drainage can be improved and obstacles can be effectively removed. He said that this timely step is being taken to protect urban infrastructure, prevent possible urban flooding and ensure effective drainage during the rains.

In the meeting, orders were issued to the heads of the relevant departments to take preventive measures and make all

preparations to deal with the monsoon emergency situation and possible flood situation. The Chief Secretary directed that all Deputy Commissioners should hold a meeting in this regard in their respective districts immediately after Eid and send it to the concerned monsoon departments so that they could be well aware of their respective responsibilities. It was decided in the meeting that in any emergency situation, there should be an effective communication system between all the institutions so that the situation could be dealt with in the shortest possible time and in the best possible manner.—APP

## Over 100,000 seek treatment after Eid meat overconsumption in KP

PESHAWAR: Thousands of people visited hospitals and medical clinics with stomach pain and digestive complications during the three days of Eid-ul-Adha due to over consumption of sacrificial meat. According to reports from Health Department released here on Tuesday, around 103,922 number of people were attended in Emergency Wards of different hospitals in 37 districts of KP. Among these 103,922, thousands of patients were brought with complaints of stomach pain, vomiting and indigestion. Majority of the patients were referred to gastro wards and people with minor problems were prescribed medicine for treatment. Apart from digestive problems, hospitals in KP also treated 760 cases of dog bite and around 30 cases of snake bite in the province. Number of major cases conducted during emergency in operation theatre are around 10263. While 1901 number of deliveries were conducted in public sector health facilities.—DNA

## British national held with heroin at Peshawar Airport: ANF

## DNA

RAWALPINDI: The Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF), conducting six operations across the country, recovered as many as 25,361 kilograms of drugs worth more than Rs 2.51 million and arrested five suspects, including a British National and a woman, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman on Tuesday. He informed that 461 grams of heroin were recovered from a British national travelling to Birmingham at Peshawar Airport. As many as 4.8 kgs of hashish were recovered from a parcel hidden inside an air conditioner destined for Orangi Town, Karachi, at the courier office in Peshawar. Similarly, 4.5 kgs of hashish were recovered from a vehicle at RCD Road, Hub. As much as 10,800 kgs of hashish were recovered from two suspects, including a woman travelling in a public transport near Islamabad Motorway Toll plaza. As many as 3.6 kgs of hashish were recovered from a vehicle near Havelian Interchange, Hazara and the two suspects were arrested. In another operation, 1.2 kg of hashish was recovered from two suspects near the Islamabad Motorway Toll Plaza. Cases have been registered against the arrested suspects under the Narcotics Control Act, and further investigations are underway.—DNA

## Kundi praises charities for flood relief in DI Khan

## DNA

DERA ISMAIL KHAN: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Faisal Karim Kundi on Tuesday commended the efforts of charitable organizations and philanthropists for their swift and sustained support to flood-affected communities in the region. Speaking at a ceremony organized by the Faizan Global Relief Foundation (FGRF), the governor praised the foundation's role in providing financial aid to 61 affectees of 2022 floods. The event was also addressed by A-Haaj Yafoor Raza Attari, a member of the Central Council of Dawate-Islami, and Saleem Attari, the organization's provincial representative, both of whom emphasized the importance of continued humanitarian engagement. Governor Kundi noted that Dera Ismail Khan was among the hardest-hit districts during the last major flooding in 2022, primarily due to flash floods originating from the Koh-e-Sulaiman range. He expressed gratitude to FGRF for stepping in during this critical time and highlighted the need for community readiness, revealing that the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) has warned of potentially more severe

flooding in the upcoming season. "Preparedness and unity are vital," he stressed, calling on communities and relief organizations to remain vigilant. He also lauded the role of Dawate-Islami in social welfare and moral reform through its media outreach, calling such organizations "vital to the social fabric of the country." In a media interaction following the event, the governor said the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) is advocating for salary and pension increases in line with inflation in the upcoming federal budget. He criticized the KP government for failing to recommend key development projects for the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP), particularly in southern districts. He announced that the long-awaited Chashma Lift Canal project is set to be initiated by the end of the year, with the PPP laying its foundation stone. He also disclosed that land has been identified in Yarik and Giloti areas for the construction of Dera Ismail Khan International Airport. However, he accused the provincial government of creating obstacles to these major initiatives. "Despite resistance, these projects will be launched," he asserted, pledging to continue his ef-

forts for peace and progress across the province. Governor Kundi expressed concern over the allocation and use of federal funds for the merged districts, claiming that Rs 700 billion transferred to the provincial government never reached their intended beneficiaries. He also pointed to alleged corruption in solar energy projects, wheat procurement, health services, and municipal operations, alleging that Rs 50 billion were embezzled in a single district. No one else but the provincial ministers were raising figures on each other's corruption, he added. Condemning the deteriorating law and order situation in the province, the governor accused the KP administration of failing to counter the growing threat of terrorism and allowing corrupt elements to flourish. Drawing a comparison between political protests, he noted that the PPP's demonstration in Peshawar remained entirely peaceful, unlike the violent May 9 events that targeted military installations. He reaffirmed his party's commitment to development, accountability, and strengthening democratic governance in the province.

## Livestock emerges as agricultural powerhouse

MULTAN: The livestock sector has once again proven to be the backbone of Pakistan's agriculture and economy, contributing a substantial 63.60% to the agriculture sector and 14.97% to the national GDP, according to the Economic Survey 2024-25. Amidst stagnation in major crops due to climatic and economic challenges, livestock remained a beacon of resilience and growth, registering an impressive growth rate of 4.72%. Experts term it a vital pillar supporting rural livelihoods, food security, and national economic stability. "Livestock is a lifeline for millions in rural areas of the country," said Dr Jamshed Akhtar, deputy director Livestock Department. "Its consistent performance, even during uncertain times, proves the sector's potential to lead agricultural transformation in the country." He added that cattle, buffaloes, goats, and sheep not only provide milk, meat, and hides but also generate income for smallholder farmers, especially women, who play a key role in managing household-level livestock.—APP

## 652,000 tourists visited during Eid holidays in KP

Over 130,000 tourists flock to Kaghan valley

## DNA

PESHAWAR: During the three-day Eid al-Adha holidays, more than 652,000 tourists visited various tourist destinations in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The spokesperson of KP Tourism Authority told media that in Galiyat, 177,000 tourists visited, while Naran-Kaghan saw 168,000 visitors besides Malam Jabba had 160,000 tourists, and Upper Dir received 85,000 visitors. Director General of the Tourism Authority, Habib

Ullah Arif, stated that on the instructions of Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur and Tourism Advisor Zahid Chanzab, every possible facility was provided to the tourists. He added that the youth of the Tourism Police provided excellent assistance to tourists during Eid al-Adha. Habib Ullah Arif mentioned that the Tourism Authority's helpline 1422 is active 24/7. A large number of tourists visited the merged districts as well, and providing all possible facilities to tourists remains one of

the top priorities. More than 130,000 tourists have entered the picturesque Kaghan Valley during the Eid holidays, arriving in over 13,500 small and large vehicles. The valley continues to witness a heavy influx of visitors who are celebrating Eid amidst the breathtaking natural beauty, snow-capped peaks, and cool glacier winds. The large number of tourists is being facilitated under special directives issued by Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ali Amin Gandapur, and Advisor on Tourism, Cul-

ture, and Archaeology, Zahid Chanzab. Director General Shabbir Khan has also mobilized the Kaghan Development Authority (KDA) and personnel from other departments to ensure proper assistance and guidance for visitors. In response to the unprecedented crowd, KDA has canceled all staff leaves, deploying officers and field teams across the region to manage the situation efficiently. KDA officials have advised tourists to maintain a safe distance from the Kunhar River due to its high water levels and have strongly

discouraged taking photographs on riverbanks and rocks. Additionally, visitors have been urged to avoid littering in order to preserve the valley's pristine environment and natural charm.

Tourists are making the most of their Eid holidays by enjoying rafting in the clear waters of the Kunhar River and experiencing the serene beauty of natural waterfalls scattered across the valley.

KDA officials continue to remain vigilant, ensuring both safety and a memorable experience for all visitors.

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National Days and Armed Forces Days

- JUNE**
- June 02/Italy National/ Independence Day
- June 04/Finland Armed Forces Day
- June 06/Sweden National Day
- June 10/Portugal Portugal Day (National Day)
- June 10/Jordan Arab Revolution& Army Day
- June 11/United kingdom Birthday of Her Majesty The Queen Elizabeth
- June 12/Philippines Independence Day
- June 12/Russian Federation Day of Sovereignty of the Russian Federation (National Day)
- June 13/Zambia Armed Forces day
- June 17/Iceland National Day
- June 18/Seychells National Day
- June 25/Croatia National Day
- June 25/Mozambique National Day
- June 26/Azerbaijan Army Day



Turkish Airlines.....8494949



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
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- Railway Inquiry.....117
- Railway Exchange9270831-5
- WASA Rawalpindi.5555489
- CAA.....9281092



Hospitals

- CMH.....5611111
- MH.....561116
- Canth Hospital...9270907-11
- DHQ.....5556311-4
- RGH.....9290301-7
- Holy Family.....9290322-7
- PIMS.....9261170-79
- Polyclinic.....9218300-09
- Shifa International 4603666



Departments

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- CDA.....9208301-04
- Met Office.....9250360-6
- RDA.....5555864
- TMA.....5770886
- Cantonment Board 9270151-3

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- Islamabad.....0321-5744480

# Electricity underutilization, circular debt demand urgent reforms

Amer Zia noted that electricity underutilization remains a persistent issue, which can be mitigated by ensuring a reliable power supply and improving both the quality and availability of service

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: To address the challenge of electricity underutilization, privatization can be a viable option, provided certain prerequisites are met. The process should follow a phased, step-by-step approach. For other issues in the power sector, such as uneven cost recovery and rising circular debt, urgent reforms are needed in governance, service quality, and demand-side management to restore consumer trust and enhance grid efficiency. This was observed at a roundtable titled “Addressing Electricity Underutilization and Affordability: A Demand Side Approach to DISCOs Reforms,” which was held at the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS), Islamabad. The session was addressed by Amer Zia, chairman board of directors, LESCO and MEPCO, Muhammad Asim Ejaz, chief engineer IESCO, Zubair Chaudhary, general manager finance, CPPA-G, Afia Malik, senior energy economist, Pakistan Institute of Development Economics, and Khalid Rahman, chairman IPS. The session was chaired by Mirza Hamid Hassan, former federal secretary, water and power.

Amer Zia noted that electricity underutilization remains a persistent issue, which can be mitigated by ensuring a reliable power supply and improving both the quality and availability of service. He identified poor service quality as a key factor behind underutilization, driving consumers to alternative sources such as captive power and solar energy. He highlighted that three distribution companies (DISCOs) – IESCO,



FESCO, and GEPCO – are currently undergoing privatization. He asserted that the process is well-planned, well-managed, on track, and free from bureaucratic or political influence. He added that the boards are independent in their decision-making and are working efficiently to deliver results and address operational challenges. Zubair Chaudhary supported Amer Zia's views on the privatization of DISCOs but noted that it is a complex issue. He argued that performance depends more on the operating environment than on ownership status. Nonetheless, he acknowledged that privatization could help improve management and operational control. Discussing cost re-

covery and electricity underutilization, he pointed out that recovery is concentrated on a small segment of consumers despite the system being fully utilized. He noted that the rise in solar adoption has further complicated the issue of underutilization. Asim Ejaz and Afia Malik expressed skepticism about the privatization of DISCOs. Asim Ejaz argued that privatization often prioritizes profit generation over service quality, which could be counterproductive in the case of IESCO. Despite limited resources, he said, IESCO is actively working to improve service quality. He also highlighted several demand-side management initiatives undertaken by IESCO, including

automated billing and forecasting future consumption and expected bills based on historical data. Echoing Asim Ejaz's perspective, Afia Malik argued that privatization is not a new concept, but certain necessary prerequisites for its success remain unmet. She pointed out that existing power sector policies are often conflicting and undermine the intended spirit of DISCO privatization. She emphasized that while privatization can be beneficial, it must be pursued in its true form, which is lacking in the current context. Instead of full-scale privatization, she suggested that selectively privatizing certain assets may yield better outcomes. Hamid Hassan emphasized that DISCOs are not solely to blame for the rising circular debt in the power sector. He explained that inefficiencies across the generation and transmission stages are ultimately passed on to the DISCOs, which are then tasked with recovering costs across the entire value chain. When they fail to do so, electricity prices rise, making power more expensive and further contributing to underutilization. Khalid Rahman concluded the discussion by reflecting on the issue of overinvestment in power generation. He pointed to the extra generation planned for Special Economic Zones under CPEC, which largely failed to materialize, thereby contributing to the current crisis in the power sector, particularly in the form of capacity payments to IPPs and the rising circular debt. In this regard, he emphasized the importance of learning from global experiences while formulating long-term, locally grounded strategies.

## Federal Secretary lauds IBCC technological advancements, reforms

ISLAMABAD: Federal Secretary, Ministry of Federal Education & Professional Training, Nadeem Mehbub, paid an official visit to the Inter Boards Coordination Commission (IBCC) Secretariat, where he received a comprehensive briefing on the Commission's operations, key functions, and recent reform initiatives. The presentation highlighted IBCC's digital shift, showcasing the improved online application system, complaint management interface, equivalence processing timelines, and reduction in pendency rates. Mr. Mehbub commended the institution's efforts to modernize service delivery and make attestation and equivalence procedures more accessible and student-centric. During his visit, the Executive Director IBCC, Dr. Ghulam Ali Mallah has given a briefing on the operational framework of IBCC, which covered key areas such as attestation and equivalence pendency, the annual number of equivalence applicants, processing timelines, the complaint management interface, public facilitation center and the online application system. The Secretary closely reviewed all the management system, and emphasized that student convenience must remain at the core of all reforms and encouraged further coordination with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other departments to streamline procedural frameworks. Recognizing IBCC's transformation into a technology-driven body, Mr. Mehbub praised its initiatives in examination reforms, enhanced engagement with international boards, capacity-building programs, and co-curricular development. He also reviewed the Annual Performance Report and expressed satisfaction with its outcomes. Stressing the need for systemic change, Mr. Mehbub reiterated the urgency of implementing examination and assessment reforms, including the creation of a national question bank. He assured the Ministry's full support for executing decisions endorsed by the Forum of Chairmen and urged the Commission to leverage its platform for nationwide academic progress. He also endorsed IBCC's upcoming credit-based system, which aims to move students away from a marks-driven approach, fostering holistic academic development and reducing the unhealthy competition for top positions. The visit concluded with a reaffirmed commitment to innovation, collaboration, and continuous improvement across all educational boards under the umbrella of IBCC.—DNA

## RWMC's excellent cleanliness arrangements lauded

RAWALPINDI: The excellent cleanliness arrangements made by the Rawalpindi Waste Management Company (RWMC) during Eid-ul-Azha have been widely appreciated by all segments of the society, including politicians, businessmen, journalists, religious scholars and public at large. Under the 'Suthra Punjab Programme' of Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz, a thorough cleaning campaign was organized in Rawalpindi, in which thousands of cleaning staff, modern machinery and special teams were involved. Commissioner Rawalpindi Amir Khattak, Deputy Commissioner Hassan Waqar Cheema, RWMC Chief Executive Officer Rana Sajid Safdar and their staff deserved special kudos, who remained on their toes to supervise the

sanitation operation. Punjab's Senior Minister Maryam Aurangzeb said in a statement that the RWMC had set an example of true public service by providing a clean environment during Eid days. Member of the National Assembly Tahira Aurangzeb said that the 'exemplary cleaning operation' reflected the transparent governance of the Punjab chief minister. Minister for Railways Hanif Abbasi said the RWMC deserved congratulations as such a coordinated operation had never been seen before. Federal Parliamentary Secretary for Information Barrister Daniyal Chaudhry said that immediate redressal of public complaints and maintaining complete cleaning on Eid days was a good step. Chairman of Punjab Chief Minister's Inspection Team Raja

Muhammad Hanif said that the Holy Prophet's (PBUH) saying "cleanliness is half faith" was implemented in its true sense in Rawalpindi. Punjab's Parliamentary Secretary Emergency Services Ziaullah Shah said that the unprecedented cleanliness during the Eid days was the result of excellent teamwork. Senior journalist Ansar Abbasi said that transparency and innovation in the cleanliness campaign was commendable. Renowned anchor person Tariq Chaudhry saluted the RWMC staff, saying the media witnessed the high standard of cleanliness. Former Azad Jammu & Kashmir Minister Mushtaq Minhas said that the entire RWMC team worked day and night to keep Rawalpindi clean. President of the Central Association of Trad-

ers of Punjab Shahid Ghafoor Paracha said that the business community fully backed the RWMC in its cleanliness drive as "a transparent environment promotes business". Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry Vice President Tariq Jadoon said that the public seemed to be satisfied with the timely cleaning in every street, road and market of the city during Eid days. Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce President Usman Shaukat said the RWMC set a precedent of best cleaning system in the commercial centres and elsewhere, which should be emulated in other cities also. Religious scholars also appreciated the efforts of RWMC and said that cleanliness had a fundamental position in Islam. Similarly, the legal community also hailed the implementation of cleanliness regulations in letter and spirit. The social circles said in their messages of appreciation on social networking websites that Rawalpindi was really changing.—APP

## IFA inspects 42 eateries, fines 9 in hygiene drive

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Food Authority (IFA) has launched a citywide inspection campaign and its teams remained active during the festive days to check hygiene standards at restaurants, food stalls, and grocery outlets across the city and its outskirts to ensure safe food reaches the public. In a three-day inspection drive, the food authority teams checked 42 food businesses in different parts of Islamabad. While, nine of these outlets were fined a total of Rs 153,000 for poor hygiene and safety violations. Talking to APP, Deputy Director of the Islamabad Food Authority (IFA) Dr Tahira Siddique said that 30 outlets were issued improvement notices for not meeting cleanliness and food safety requirements. These notices instructed the owners to address specific issues within a set timeframe or face stricter action. According to the Deputy Director, inspections revealed multiple violations, including poor kitchen sanitation, open drains, broken floors, and fly infestations. In several cases, food was found stored in foul-smelling freezers covered in fungus. The authority also confiscated and destroyed over 40 kilograms of expired and unsafe food items during the operation. Dr. Tahira Siddique said the campaign aimed to protect public health by ensuring that food served during Eid meets basic safety standards. She added that food business operators must follow rules and maintain cleanliness to continue operations, especially during high-demand periods like Eid. She emphasized that strict action would be taken against anyone involved in food-related fraud or mismanagement. "There is no space in Islamabad for those who compromise public health," Dr. Siddique said. She further urged all food operators to cooperate with the authority's teams and follow food safety laws to avoid penalties and protect consumer health. The Islamabad Food Authority plans to continue unannounced visits to monitor food businesses and take immediate action wherever required. The authority's officials said that follow-up inspections would also be carried out to check compliance at outlets that received improvement notices. Dr. Siddique said that the goal of the food authority is not just enforcement, but also to support food operators in improving their standards. She added that providing safe and nutritious food during Eid is a shared responsibility between the government, food businesses, and consumers. The Islamabad Food Authority will continue working to reduce risks associated with contaminated or expired food and ensure that people can celebrate Eid without worrying about health hazards linked to what they eat.—DNA

## 17 outlaws including four absconders held

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police have arrested 17 outlaws including four absconders and recovered a large quantity of drugs, liquor, and weapons from their possession on Tuesday. An official told APP that teams from Shalimar, Sumbal, Tarnol, Sabzi Mandi, Kirpa, Humak, Bhara Kahu, Shahzad Town, and Bani Gala police stations arrested 13 suspects involved in various criminal activities and recovered 3,900 grams of heroin, 401 bottles of liquor, three pistols, two guns, and ammunition from their possession. He said that cases have been registered against the arrested individuals and further investigation is underway. He said that in a special campaign to apprehend proclaimed offenders and absconders, police teams also arrested four accused who were on the run from law enforcement. He said that following the special directions of Inspector General of Police (IGP) Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi, the capital police had accelerated the crackdown against criminal elements to ensure peace and order in the city. He said that the Islamabad Police is committed to protecting the lives and property of citizens and no element would be allowed to disrupt public peace.—APP

## Major reforms to strengthen higher education

ISLAMABAD: The Higher Education Commission (HEC) has continued its pivotal role in shaping the future of higher education in Pakistan through strategic reforms and targeted investments in the sector. Since its inception in 2002, the HEC has aimed to expand access, improve quality and align higher education with the country's developmental needs. According to the Economic Survey 2024-25 released on Monday, despite progress in increasing enrollment, Pakistan still trails behind global standards, prompting renewed efforts during FY 2025 to bridge the gap. Between July and March of FY 2025, the HEC spearheaded a wide range of initiatives under the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) 2024-25, backed by a federal allocation of Rs 61.12 billion. This funding supports 159 development projects, including 138 ongoing and 21 new initiatives across public sector universities. Notably, Rs 12 billion has been dedicated to Phase-IV of the Prime Minister's Youth Laptop Scheme, while Rs 9 billion has been retained specifically for this program. Key projects include the establishment of five National Centers in cutting-edge fields such as Nanotechnology, Quantum Computing, Advanced Manufacturing, Brand Development, and a Growth Center. Other major efforts comprise the launch of the PM's National Volunteer Corps, the creation of the National Institute of Intelligence and Security Studies (NIISS), and the National Cyber Security Academy (NCSA). Aligned with the national vision "URAAN Pakistan," the HEC is focusing on accelerating the development of human capital and modernizing IT infrastructure within the higher education system.—APP

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## Briefs

Red Zone  
entry, exit  
points  
temporarily  
closed

ISLAMABAD: In view of law and order considerations, the Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) has announced the temporary closure of major entry and exit points to the Red Zone, including Express Chowk, Nadra Chowk, and T-Cross Bari Imam, until further notice. An official told APP on Tuesday that citizens are advised to use alternative routes via Serena Hotel, Marriott Hotel and Margalla Road to access the Red Zone. He said the ITP is actively working to guide and assist commuters to ensure smooth traffic flow. He further advised citizens to plan their journeys with an additional 20-minute buffer to avoid delays. He said for further information, citizens may contact the Traffic Helpline at 1915.—APP

ANF recovers  
over 25 kg  
of drugs

RAWALPINDI: The Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF), conducting six operations across the country, recovered as many as 25.361 kilograms of drugs worth more than Rs 2.51 million and arrested five suspects, including a British National and a woman, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman on Tuesday. He informed that 461 grams of heroin were recovered from a British national travelling to Birmingham at Peshawar Airport. As many as 4.8 kgs of hashish were recovered from a parcel hidden inside an air conditioner destined for Orangi Town, Karachi, at the courier office in Peshawar. Similarly, 4.5 kgs of hashish were recovered from a vehicle at RCD Road, Hub. As much as 10,800 kgs of hashish were recovered from two suspects, including a woman travelling in a public transport near Islamabad Motorway Toll plaza. As many as 3.6 kgs of hashish were recovered from a vehicle near Havelian Interchange, Hazara and the two suspects were arrested. In another operation, 1.2 kg of hashish was recovered from two suspects near the Islamabad Motorway Toll Plaza.—APP

Substantial  
steps being  
taken to  
modernize  
railways: Hanif

ISLAMABAD: Railways Minister Hanif Abbasi on Tuesday said the number of passengers would be increased through substantial steps being taken to meet expectations of the public. Addressing a press conference at the office of the Divisional Superintendent of Railways here, he said that around 200 carriages were currently under preparation and are expected to be finalized by 2027 for the mainstream use. He said that since assuming charge, the ministry had focused on bringing about a change in services in three key areas: punctuality, provision of quality food, and cleanliness, at stations and inside coaches.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Board of Investment Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh presenting award to General Manager Capital Smart City M Ali Naseer at World Environment Day Conference organised by Devcom-Pakistan.

Pakistani researcher  
wins 2nd prize in  
SCO competition

“My academic journey in China has opened doors to global innovation,” said Aidah, acknowledging her team’s foundation by researchers from AT&T Labs (formerly Bell Labs) and collaboration with top institutions including MIT, University of British Columbia (UBC), University of Science and Technology of China (USTC) and Shanghai Jiao Tong University (SJTU)

## DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistani researcher Aidah Abdul Wahid claimed second prize at the 4th SCO Youth Innovation and Entrepreneurship Competition on June 9, presenting her team’s revolutionary AI project “Z-UP” before 300 delegates from eight member states. The Gwadar native, who is currently pursuing her doctorate at China Ocean University, showcased Z-UP: The Foundational Infrastructure for AI-Internet and Agentic-Web, which aims to revolutionize AI

infrastructure by unifying fragmented AI systems into a seamless, intelligent network, Gwadar Pro reported on Tuesday. It builds a collaborative B2B ecosystem for next-generation productivity by enabling enterprise-grade shared computing power. Her presentation highlighted the project’s breakthrough in virtualizing GPU infrastructure, enabling shared high-performance computing for AI and metaverse applications. “My academic journey in China has opened doors to global innovation,” said Aidah, acknowledging her team’s

foundation by researchers from AT&T Labs (formerly Bell Labs) and collaboration with top institutions including MIT, University of British Columbia (UBC), University of Science and Technology of China (USTC) and Shanghai Jiao Tong University (SJTU). “This achievement reflects Pakistan’s growing tech capabilities and shows our youth can lead in sustainable development solutions.” The competition saw 12 finalists selected from 200+ entries across AI, new materials and smart technologies. China’s unmanned airport project topped

the list, while 35 percent of the shortlisted innovations involved cross-border teams underlining the SCO’s emphasis on international cooperation. Aidah dedicated her award to aspiring Pakistani scientists, particularly girls from Gwadar. “This platform proves our ideas matter globally. I want Balochistan’s youth to see no boundaries in STEM.” The event, part of the SCO Year of Sustainable Development, brought together government officials, entrepreneurs and tech leaders from Pakistan, China, Russia, Turkey, India and Central Asian states.

RCCI calls for  
urgent structural  
reforms

RAWALPINDI: The President of the Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI), Usman Shaukat, has welcomed the release of the Pakistan Economic Survey 2024–25, noting that the report signals early signs of economic stabilization and recovery. Shaukat highlighted encouraging macroeconomic indicators: GDP growth has reached 2.68%, inflation has fallen sharply, and the policy interest rate has been reduced from 22% to 11%. The current account posted a surplus of \$1.9 billion, while foreign exchange reserves rose to \$16.64 billion—contributing to improved investor confidence and stability in the Pakistani Rupee. “These figures show that the economy is on the mend,” said Shaukat. “However, stabilization is only the first step. Now begins the real work—undertaking deep and sustained structural reforms.” He urged the government to act decisively in addressing long-standing economic inefficiencies: “It is critical to eliminate bureaucratic red tape, ensure policy continuity, and reduce the cost of doing business. Without this, economic gains may prove short-lived.” Shaukat emphasized that the upcoming federal budget is a pivotal moment to introduce industry-friendly policies, broaden the tax base, and enhance governance. “With macroeconomic stability taking root, we must not lose momentum,” he stated. “Reforms in energy pricing, taxation, and public sector performance are no longer optional—they are essential.” The RCCI also commended the government’s success in curbing inflation, which fell from nearly 40% to below 5%, with April 2025 recording a historic low of just 0.3%—a major milestone in economic management. “The direction is right, but the pace must now accelerate,” concluded Shaukat. “Pakistan must use this opportunity to build a more resilient and competitive economy for the future.—DNA

Global leadership endorse  
Pakistan’s narrative

ISLAMABAD: A senior Pakistani diplomatic team member, Dr. Musadik Malik Tuesday thanked Prime Minister, PM Shahbaz Sharif, and army for their successful drive against India on both military and diplomatic fronts, voicing optimism that global leaders are backing Pakistan’s stance. Dr. Musadik, in an exclusive interaction with a local news channel, highlighted the backing of global leaders, including the US and UK for Pakistan’s narrative, emphasizing the country’s commitment to peace. According to Dr. Musadik, Pakistan’s PM offered India a peaceful resolution through talks, but India chose aggression; if India’s stance remains unchanged, it will face severe repercussions, including damage to its aircraft. Dr. Musadik claimed that the world is now forcing India to re-evaluate its stance, criticizing India’s “childish mindset” as no longer tenable.—APP

CPEC plays  
transformative role in  
economic development

## DNA

ISLAMABAD: CPEC continues to play a transformative role in regional connectivity and economic development, said Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb. Various development activities are in progress under the CPEC. In the transport infrastructure sector, “eight projects totaling US\$ 6.7 billion have been completed, while several others are underway”. The other projects included the construction of 888 kilometers of motorways and highways, while another 853 kilometers are under development with local funding, Gwadar Pro reported on Tuesday. Finance

Minister unveiled the Pakistan Economic Survey 2024–25, projecting a 2.7 percent GDP growth for the outgoing fiscal year. They survey also highlighted key achievements under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), particularly in transport infrastructure and strategic development at Gwadar Port. Inflation for the year was recorded at 4.6 percent, as the country seeks to stabilize its economy while accelerating progress on major connectivity and trade-related projects. “We now have to move towards GDP stabilization. We are currently moving in a better direction,” Aurangzeb said during the survey launch in Islamabad. Citing CPEC’s

achievement, the Minister said, among the completed initiatives is the 120-km Havelian-Thakot section of the Karakoram Highway, a flagship project recognized with international awards. Other key operational projects include the 392-km Multan-Sukkur Motorway, the 297-km Hakla-D.I. Khan Motorway, and the 110-km Khuzdar-Basima Highway. “It (CPEC) strengthens Pakistan’s integration into regional and global supply chains, fostering trade, investment, and inclusive development.” The survey report also highlights progress in digital and urban connectivity, including the completion of a cross-border optical fiber cable and

the Orange Line Metro Train in Lahore. The New Gwadar International Airport is now operational, enhancing air connectivity. Ongoing projects such as the Zhob-Kuchlak, Nokundi-Mashkhal, and Awaran-Khuzdar sections, as well as feasibility studies for the Babusar Tunnel and the Mirpur-Muzaffarabad-Mansehra corridor, signal continued momentum in infrastructure development under CPEC. The Main Line-1 (ML-1) railway project remains under technical and financial consultation, while the framework agreement for the Karachi Circular Railway has been shared with the Chinese side. The survey highlighted significant progress in the development of Gwadar Port and its Free Zone. Since 2013, the China Overseas Ports Holding Company Limited (COPHCL) has invested over US\$ 50 million dollars to upgrade port infrastructure. The port is fully operational and regularly handling commercial traffic.

East-West eco corridor ensuring  
prosperity, peace and better trade

## NAIRA ESHAAL

The idea of an East-West Economic Corridor (EWEC) is a vision caused by necessity, hope, and the enduring truth that no nation can live in isolation. In Asia there exists a silent promise ensuring prosperity, shared dreams, and mutual co-existence. It is among those regions which have been since quite a long time long divided by history, mistrust, and opportunities which could have been exploited to the utmost level for the welfare of the people living in such regions. Now, there is a great need to rethink this connectivity in terms of new paradigms. There is a need to reimagine it in terms of infrastructure, inspiration and integration. However, the dream of prosperity could not be materialized because most of the time the shadows of mistrust loomed large in the regions where we live. Shared progress could also not be materialized because of these suspicions. Although Central Asia and

South Asia have a geographically proximity, most of the time they remained disconnected. This disconnect was evident in terms of institutional, economic and ideological divides however, these fault lines are not something which cannot be redeemed into benefits. The East-West Economic Corridor has high potential in terms of bridging those gaps that can make the nations move nearer together and also bring the people closer in the geographical areas which have been marred by wars, distrust and divisions. North-South connectivity is hugely influenced by China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and CPEC which is its flagship project. This has enormous potential for opening doors for infrastructure development in Pakistan. The East-West Corridor invites us to broaden our field of view by turning toward Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan and towards Bangladesh and India. The only impediment which has been hindering it from witnessing the dawn of the day to the full-

est extent has been establishing trust on firm grounds. Pakistan can leverage its geo-economic position with its Gwadar port and Qasim port, road networks and railways which can serve as an effective channel between Central and South Asia. With the movement of goods, people, ideas and energy, it can indeed serve as a potent conduit with railway links from Uzbekistan to Gwadar or TAPI gas pipeline and the digitized trade corridors and e-commerce between Tashkent and Karachi. The required elements are institutional support and political will. The populist politics between India and Pakistan has also remained a hurdle in establishing these corridors. Most important factor in regional connectivity is trust. It can be acquired through the use of soft power, pacifist literature, diplomacy, talks, dialogues, seminars, research collaborations and intellectual exchange programs. Intelligentsia and think tanks with a pragmatic approach can make this dream come true. Religious scholars can also play an important part through arranging

interfaith harmony conferences preaching tolerance. EWEC Authority if created like CPEC Authority with a headquarter located in Islamabad or Tashkent can have linkages with the international bodies like Asian Development Bank, World Bank, AIIB and even with the regional organizations like ECO, SCO and even ASEAN to attract technical and financial support. EWEC Association can serve as a joint platform and can serve as a forum for hosting seminars and facilitating B2B partnerships. The challenges cannot be ignored which may include the unstable political situation in Afghanistan with an Indian wish to dominate the region. But we will have to admit the reality that connectivity of the regions will, certainly, facilitate economies leading to collective prosperity. For this purpose, we must think of building partnerships. In this way we can embark on a journey with visionary plans and good ideas. Therefore, it can be asserted that the East-West corridor is very much likely to serve as a bridge between destinies.

DIGs conduct  
surprise  
visits to  
checkpoints

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Inspector General (DIG) of Police Muhammad Jawad Tariq and DIG Law and Order Muhammad Atiq Tahir conducted surprise inspection visits to various duty points across the federal capital. An official told media that the senior officers were accompanied by SSP Investigation and SSP Operations during the visits. The DIGs reviewed the security arrangements and met with on-duty officers, issuing directives to perform their duties with vigilance and dedication. They said all officers must remain alert and fulfill their responsibilities with honesty and integrity, ensuring the safety of citizens and protection of public property. DIG Tariq said officers were also instructed to treat citizens respectfully during checking operations to strengthen public trust and cooperation. DIG Tariq said a firm crackdown has been ordered against suspicious individuals and criminal elements across the city to maintain law and order and ensure the safety of residents. DIG Tariq said the primary objective of the police force is to control crime and instill a strong sense of security among citizens.—APP

Maritime sector  
navigates global  
challenges with  
promising growth

ISLAMABAD: In the first nine months of FY2024-25, Pakistan’s maritime sector achieved a commendable performance, reflecting its ability to thrive despite global economic uncertainties and freight market volatility. As per Pakistan Economic Survey 2024-25 presented by Federal Minister for Finance Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb on Monday, this resilience positions the sector for continued growth and opportunities. The Pakistan National Shipping Corporation (PNSC) reported a consolidated net profit after tax of PNSC (Group) achieved a net profit after tax of Rs 15,439 million (PNSC: Rs 3,711 million) as against Rs 14,686 million (PNSC: Rs 3,073 million) in the corresponding period last year. The PNSC (Group) has achieved a turnover of Rs 28,405 million (including Rs 4,050 million from PNSC) as compared to Rs 34,842 million (including Rs 6,969 million from PNSC) in the corresponding period last year. Additionally, Karachi Port Trust (KPT), the country’s premier port, saw a 4 percent increase in cargo handling, reaching 40.37 million tonnes during the same period, up from 38.8 million tonnes in FY24. KPT, which can handle over 125 million tonnes annually including 4.25 million TEUs, remains a key node for transshipment and transit trade.—APP

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## Musk vs. Trump – a hostility that could reshape US politics

THE simmering tension between tech mogul Elon Musk and U.S. President Donald Trump appears to have entered a new phase—one marked not just by personal differences but potentially by political confrontation. Musk, the billionaire behind Tesla, SpaceX, and X (formerly Twitter), is reportedly considering forming a new political party in the United States, a move that could significantly disrupt the American political landscape and directly challenge Trump’s populist influence. Musk’s growing disillusionment with Trump’s way of governance, especially during his administration, has been no secret. From erratic policymaking to controversial executive orders, Musk has repeatedly voiced his discomfort with the Trump-era approach to leadership. He was among the early executives to walk away from Trump’s advisory councils during his presidency, particularly over issues such as climate policy and the withdrawal from the Paris Climate Accord. Recently, this rift has intensified. Musk has openly criticized Trump’s leadership style and legislative priorities. In a dramatic turn, Musk also spilled sensational details about Trump’s alleged sex scandals—details that could tarnish the former president’s reputation further and fuel divisions within the conservative base. While the veracity and impact of these revelations will be contested, they underscore how personal and political the Musk-Trump rivalry has become. Now, the idea of Musk forming a new political party adds a new and unpredictable dimension. Though creating a viable third party in the U.S. is a herculean task due to entrenched bipartisan structures, Musk has the resources, visibility, and unconventional appeal to attract a significant following. His political ideology remains loosely defined—somewhere between libertarian tech optimism and pragmatic centrism—but that ambiguity could actually work in his favor. Disillusioned voters from both parties, especially the younger and tech-savvy demographic, may be drawn to his message if it is presented as an antidote to the extremes of both Trumpism and traditional liberalism. A Musk-backed political party may not win the presidency or dominate Congress overnight, but it could alter the balance of power. If he siphons even a small percentage of the Republican base or centrist independents, it could weaken Trump. More importantly, it may force both major parties to confront neglected issues like AI regulation, climate technology, digital freedom, and the future of work—areas Musk frequently highlights. Trump, for his part, has already demonstrated an appetite for aggressive counterattacks, and it’s likely he will respond with characteristic bombast. Given his past behavior, including his role in the Capitol riots and consistent undermining of U.S. democratic institutions, Musk’s challenge could provoke a new wave of political drama.

# THE REPUTATION IMPERATIVE: why corporate survival hinges on trust

## Book Review

**Title:** Reputation Management and Crisis Communication  
**Author Name:** Imran Ghaznavi  
**Reviewed by:** Ansar Mahmood Bhatti

ISLAMABAD: The boardroom was silent when the call came in. A whistleblower had leaked internal documents to the press. The CEO’s face turned ashen. Shares plummeted 30% in pre-market trading. By noon, regulators were circling. Within a week, a 50-year-old brand was fighting for its life. This wasn’t just a crisis—it was a reputation assassination. And according to Imran Ghaznavi’s groundbreaking book, “Reputation Management and Crisis Communication: A Study of Corporate Sector”, it was entirely preventable. The Silent Killer in Corporate Risk Reports: Ghaznavi’s investigation reveals a chilling reality: 83% of Fortune 500 companies lack formal reputation risk oversight at the board level—despite reputation failures causing 65% of market value collapses since 2010 (per Harvard Business Review data). “Reputation risk isn’t a footnote—it’s the black box of corporate survival,” Ghaznavi told this reporter during a tense interview. “Yet most risk committees treat it like a PR problem, not a governance time bomb.” His findings expose that the Governance Gap: Only 12% of S&P 500 boards have a dedicated reputation risk committee. The Speed Trap: In the digital age, crises go global in under 19 minutes—but the average corporate response takes 47 hours. The Trust Tax: Companies with weak reputation systems pay 7.5% more for capital (MIT Sloan data). The Ghaznavi Doctrine: A SEAL Reputation Team Six for Corporate Drawing over 30 years of frontline experience—including advising multinationals, public sector institutions during the 2008 financial crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic—Ghaznavi prescribes wartime-style preparedness: 1. The Boardroom Battlefield: Mandate “monthly reputation risk briefings” alongside financial reports. Tie “30% of C-suite compensation” to reputation KPIs (employee trust scores, social media sentiment) 2. The 60-Minute Response Rule: Pre-drafted crisis playbooks for “17 worst-case scenarios” (CEO scandal, cyberattack, activist attack). “Dark site” media portals ready to launch in 15 minutes 3. The Truth Dividend: When a Ghaznavi-advised the chairman of a national airline (PIA -2006) during initial days of ban its on flights in Europe, to have patience handling main stream media. The silent fight between the CEO of a national newspaper and the airline made it worse to handle public image of the airline which ultimately resulted in serious financial and reputational loss. Why Regulators Are Taking Notes: Globally the Federal Reserve stress tests now include “reputation contagion scenarios”. The SEC is debating on mandatory reputation risk disclosures. “Ghaznavi’s work proves reputation isn’t soft science—it’s the new systemic risk,” says the regulatory expert. The Bottom Line: A Corporate Survival Kit for, CEOs: Your next crisis isn’t coming—it’s already here, investors: Demand reputation audits like you scrutinize balance sheets. Business executives: This is your anti-Black Swan playbook. As Ghaznavi warns: “The companies that survive this decade won’t be the biggest or the richest—they’ll be the most trusted.”

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## Unveiling the secret of China’s remarkable progress

FEW nations in modern history have transformed themselves as dramatically and swiftly as China. From the economic stagnation and mass poverty of the late 20th century to becoming the world’s second-largest economy, China’s ascent is both historic and instructive. Much of this progress can be attributed to the Chinese leadership’s ability to craft long-term strategies, aggressively fight corruption, and most importantly, adopt a comprehensive and uniquely tailored model to lift hundreds of millions out of poverty. At the heart of China’s success lies disciplined governance backed by state-led planning. The Communist Party of China (CPC), under successive leaderships and most recently under President Xi Jinping, has demonstrated a fierce resolve in tackling corruption—once viewed as a deeply entrenched menace. The anti-corruption campaign launched in 2012 was not just symbolic; it targeted “tigers and flies alike”—both high-ranking officials and grassroots bureaucrats. Thousands of officials were investigated, and many were punished publicly, sending a strong message across the bureaucracy that malfeasance would not be tolerated. This crackdown was not just about cleaning the image of the Party; it also ensured the efficient delivery of services and resources to the people. Without corruption acting as a drain on public finances and a barrier to fair implementation of development policies, the state was able to channel its energies into poverty alleviation, infrastructure development, and economic reform. China’s poverty alleviation model is unlike any seen in the developing world. It is marked by a fusion of centralized policymaking and localized execution. From 1980 to 2020, China lifted over 800 million people out of absolute poverty—a feat recognized by global institutions including the World Bank and the United Nations. The “targeted poverty alleviation” strategy initiated under President Xi focused on identifying poor households, understanding their needs, and then implementing custom solutions—be it vocational training, relocation, or subsidies. Central to this model was investment in infrastructure in remote areas—building roads, schools, clinics, and digital connectivity. At the same time, rural industries were encouraged, including agriculture, eco-tourism, and e-commerce. Young professionals and party workers were sent to villages to assist in planning and implementation. The model stressed human dignity—those lifted from poverty were not treated as passive recipients of aid, but as participants in development. Another significant feature was the policy consistency over decades. Unlike many democracies where policy changes with each administration, China pursued long-term goals with continuity. The Five-Year Plans—often mocked by critics—have proven to be effective tools of economic and social development when implemented with discipline and vision.

## When a Three-Paise Rise Matterred

MUHAMMAD MOHSIN IQBAL

SINCE the earliest flickers of my conscious memory, I have seen the several federal budgets of Pakistan presented with much fanfare and anticipation each June. It was a season not unlike a grand festival, awaited with equal parts anxiety and hope—especially by the business community and government servants. The former looked to it with a calculating eye; which commodities would bear the new burden of tax, what levies might shift the market tides in their favour. The latter, more modestly, wondered how many increments would be awarded to their salaries and pensions. The days leading up to the budget were filled with speculation, and for some, strategic preparation. There were traders who, by mere virtue of stocked goods in their warehouses, found themselves richer overnight, simply because the new duties declared from the treasury benches inflated the prices of their inventory. In those days, the post-budget press conference of the finance minister held an air of solemnity and consequence. Every word, every phrase, was weighed and measured by industrialists and economists alike. In the National Assembly, thick budget booklets were distributed—heavy tomes filled with numbers and aspirations. Few members of the House had the patience or interest to consult these volumes, but they were a treasure trove for journalists and parliamentary researchers, who would mine them for days and weeks to follow. Time, however, has galloped on. The budget—once an exercise in delicate statecraft and public sentiment—is now a behemoth whose size and scale are met with little more than weary nods. Gone are the days when a slight increase of a few paises in a commodity’s price would provoke spirited debates and media frenzies. There was once a time when even a marginal adjustment in the cost of everyday items would be met with fiery protest or passionate defense. That innocence—or perhaps that vigilance—seems lost. There was another instance where kerosene oil—a staple in the homes of the common man—saw a nominal increase of three paise. Again, Mehboob-ul-Haq rose with a clarity of thought rarely heard today. He pointed out that in the dimly lit huts of East Pakistan, where kerosene lamps were the only source of light, this increase would extinguish not just flame but hope. “When the lamps do not burn,” he warned, “the millions spent on family planning will go to waste.” The Finance Minister was convinced by their arguments and withdrew the 3 paise increase. How stark is the contrast when one compares the scope and scale of past budgets with the fiscal leviathan we now encounter annually. In the days of Ayub Khan, the federal budget hovered modestly around Rs. 2 to 3 billion. During Zulfikar Ali Bhutto’s tenure, it gradually crossed Rs. 20 billion as nationalisation expanded the state’s role. Under General Zia-ul-Haq, the figure rose to around Rs. 100 billion, reflecting a growing state machinery and an economy adjusting to regional conflicts and foreign aid.

# Elon Musk and Donald Trump: From allies to adversaries

Qamar Bashir



All of Musk’s calculations unraveled. No tax relief. No contract expansions. No Mars funding. No regulatory easing. In fact, the very act of placing Musk at the head of DOGE seemed, in hindsight, to be a clever political decoy. Trump utilized Musk’s corporate stature to execute controversial decisions, allowing the tech mogul to soak up the public’s anger...

ELON MUSK is widely hailed as one of the most intelligent, inventive, and enterprising individuals of our era. From humble beginnings, he created Tesla—now a global symbol of prestige, environmental innovation, and American industrial might. His Cybertrucks, sedans, and Model Xs populate highways from California to China, and his vision goes far beyond Earth. With SpaceX, he dreams of colonizing Mars; with Starlink, he aims to bring satellite-based internet to every corner of the world, especially those untouched by traditional connectivity. Musk is no ordinary entrepreneur. He is the embodiment of the private sector’s limitless ambition—sharp, calculative, and daring. It was with this same foresight that Musk evaluated the 2024 U.S. presidential race. Using the full weight of his data-driven infrastructure, artificial intelligence labs, and possibly even his experimental quantum computing capabilities, Musk and his team likely ran models on how much a Trump victory would benefit his sprawling empire. Musk became the single largest individual contributor to Donald Trump’s campaign, funneling nearly \$288 million into the 2024 re-election effort. This was not charity. This was calculated investment. He expected returns—massive ones. Had his projections materialized, Musk stood to gain significantly. He was banking on Trump to offer substantial tax breaks for electric vehicle producers like Tesla, open government coffers to fund the Mars colonization effort via SpaceX, expand satellite contracts under Starlink, and ease federal regulations that often choked innovation. This was to be the ultimate private-public handshake—a deal between power and capital, innovation and governance. Trump, a seasoned political tactician and unpredictable force, had other plans. While initially wooing Musk and appointing him to head the newly formed Department of Government Efficiency (ironically abbreviated as DOGE), Trump positioned Musk at the forefront of sweeping bureaucratic reforms. Musk, known for disrupting industries, found himself trying to “disrupt” the federal government—a machine more massive, convoluted, and interlocked than any private sector conglomerate. Alongside him were Anonymous as the department’s lead strategist and Vivek Ramaswamy as deputy, neither of whom had any

substantial experience managing such a massive administrative ecosystem. What ensued was chaos. Under Musk’s brief stewardship of DOGE, thousands of federal employees were laid off in an aggressive downsizing campaign. Entire departments, like USIS (U.S. International Services), were defunded and rendered obsolete. The social security net—lifelines for the elderly, veterans, disabled citizens, and the working poor—faced brutal austerity. Education institutions were mocked and dismissed for “wasting money on trivial research,” as per internal memos. Predictably, the blowback was immense. But here’s the twist—while the political consequences of these decisions damaged the Trump administration’s public image, Musk bore the brunt of the reputational carnage. Protesters boycotted Tesla vehicles. Starlink subscriptions declined. SpaceX lost pending government partnerships. In total, Tesla lost nearly \$150 billion in market capitalization, and Musk’s personal wealth reportedly dropped by over \$8 billion in a matter of weeks. The public began seeing Musk not as a visionary, but as an enabler of political cruelty—one who traded compassion and ethics for contracts and concessions. His marriage of convenience with Trump was rapidly deteriorating into a nightmare. And then came the final blow. Trump, in an unexpected move that blindsided Musk’s strategy teams, eliminated all federal tax credits for electric vehicles, a key policy instituted during the Biden administration that had helped Tesla maintain its competitive edge. The “Big Beautiful Bill,” as Trump called it, redirected funds toward fossil-fuel-based industries, internal combustion engine subsidies, and defense manufacturing. All of Musk’s calculations unraveled. No tax relief. No contract expansions. No Mars funding. No regulatory easing. In fact, the very act of placing Musk at the head of DOGE seemed, in hindsight, to be a clever political decoy. Trump utilized Musk’s corporate stature to execute controversial decisions, allowing the tech mogul to soak up the public’s anger, while Trump distanced himself as the politician who didn’t cave to corporate interests. Musk, in turn, was left alienated—abandoned both by political leadership and the public. His products suffered, his reputation suffered, and most painfully,

he received none of the political rewards he had bet nearly \$300 million on. The entire affair became a textbook case of conflict of interest gone wrong. In a recent interview, Musk admitted that meddling in politics was “a bitter lesson.” He vowed to withdraw from political maneuvering and focus instead on what he does best—innovation. The lesson? Never underestimate a politician—especially not one like Trump, who has made unpredictability his strongest political asset. He is known to act with unilateral decisions, often impulsive and strategically obscure. Musk, for all his intelligence and resources, failed to predict the very human, very emotional, and highly unpredictable nature of political power. As someone who served in government and diplomacy, I fully understand the scale and complexity of the federal machinery. It is interconnected, fiercely protected by legacy systems, and incredibly hard to reform. What Musk attempted was akin to striking a mountain with a chisel. But instead of breaking the mountain, he broke his own tool. Moreover, Musk’s central role in auditing departments that were, ironically, his clients—such as those dealing with tech contracts, infrastructure, and innovation—amounted to a glaring ethical lapse. This wasn’t just bad optics; it was a profound conflict of interest, and the backlash was swift and brutal. Ultimately, Trump gained. He emerged as the anti-corporate crusader who didn’t bend to billionaire pressures. Musk lost—not only money and market share but trust. Trust is the most expensive currency in politics and business, and once lost, it’s almost impossible to buy back. This saga of two titans—one of politics, the other of technology—reminds us that when the public and private sectors collide without clear boundaries and ethical foresight, the resulting wreckage can be colossal. Musk may be a brilliant inventor, but politics proved to be a different beast altogether. Let this be a lasting lesson to all powerful entrepreneurs: play your part, not theirs.

– Press Secretary to the President (Rtd)  
Former Press Minister at the Embassy  
of Pakistan to France  
Former MD, SRBC  
Macomb, Michigan, USA



## Briefs

## Pakistan considers Russia...

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across the country.” The Ambassador also reaffirmed Russia’s continued support for Pakistan on various international platforms, noting that both nations are working together to deepen ties in education, diplomacy, and mutual development. The event concluded with Russian musician’s performance on folk music.

## Budget falls short of expectations...

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ignored or implemented with delays. He warned that the proposed measures would contribute to rising inflation, potentially pushing it to 7.5%. He acknowledged that the salaried class has been provided with considerable relief; however, tough measures have been introduced to broaden the tax net. The announcement of modest reductions in corporate tax and super tax, as well as a package for the construction industry, were noted as positive developments. Group Leader Sohail Altaf emphasized that while the proposals to expand the tax base are important, they should be implemented in a manner that is encouraging rather than overly stringent.

## PM wanted budget...

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The minister recalled that the country was on the verge of default in 2022 but now due to prudent policies of the present regime, it witnessed economic stability. Talar reminded that opposition leaders used to bet on Pakistan’s default, but with the grace of Allah Almighty and untiring efforts of the government under leadership of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, economy was stable all economic indicators have improved remarkably. He said inflation had decreased in Pakistan and overall growth had shown upward trend.

## Induction to ICC Hall of fame

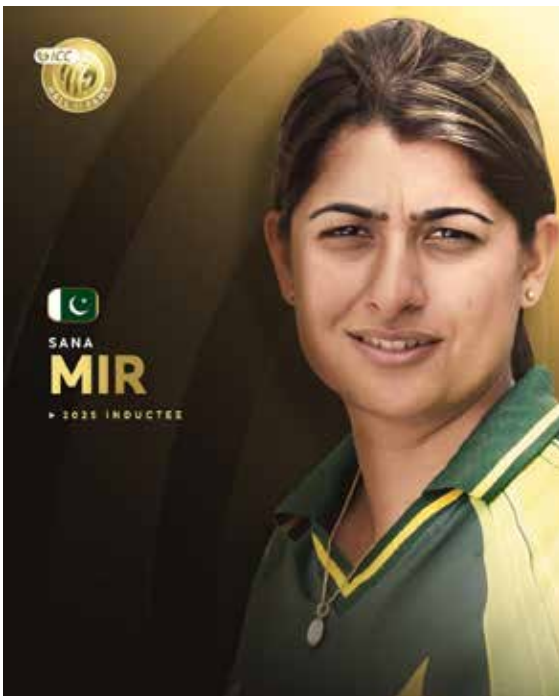
## Pak’s UN envoy delighted at Sana Mir’s achievement

*In a career spanning 15 years, where she captained for eight years, Sana Mir picked up 150 wickets in 121 ODIs and 89 wickets in 106 T20Is, scoring 1630 and 820 runs respectively, the ICC said in a write-up*

## DNA

UNITED NATIONS: Pakistan’s UN Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmad has congratulated Sana Mir, who became the first female cricketer from the country to be inducted into the International Cricket Council’s (ICC) Hall of Fame, calling it a matter of great pride.

“As a sports enthusiast and a cricket fan, I am extremely delighted that Sana Mir has made it to the ICC Hall of Fame,” he said while talking to APP correspondent. “She (Sana) has already broken many records, and this is another feather in her cap – a historic moment, a matter of great pride for the entire nation,” the Ambassador added. In a career spanning 15 years, where she captained for eight years, Sana Mir picked up 150 wickets in 121 ODIs and 89 wickets in 106 T20Is, scoring 1630 and 820 runs respectively, the ICC said in a write-up. Her best year was 2014, where she collected 21 wickets in 11 ODIs, while leading the team to an Asian Games gold medal, a feat she had achieved in 2010 as well, one year after being appointed as captain. In 2018, Sana Mir became the first Pakistani woman to reach the top of the ICC ODI Player Rankings. It wouldn’t be the only first for Sana Mir, who was also the first Asian woman cricketer to play 100 T20Is, along with being the first Pakistani woman cricketer to play 100 ODIs. She was also the first Pakistani woman cricketer to win the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Cricketer of the Year award and is now the first Pakistani woman to be inducted into the ICC Hall of Fame. Sana Mir also created history at the WWC17 Qualifier by becoming the first-ever bowler from Pakistan to take 100 ODI Wickets, the ICC said. She took over the captaincy in 2009 when she was 23, and



from then on, she was consistently amongst the top 20 ODI bowlers, achieving the coveted No.1 ranking in 2018. Sana Mir achieved this feat after picking up seven wickets in a three-match ODI series against the top-ranked Australian side, being the highest wicket-taker in the series.

## FIH Pro League: India lose to late Netherlands winner for second time

## DNA

THE HAGUE: The Indian men’s hockey team lost 3-2 to the Netherlands in the FIH Pro League on Monday, as they once again conceded a late winner, despite a much-improved performance from the 2-1 loss against the same opponents on Saturday. In that game on Saturday, India had only nine circle entries in the whole match. Here, they had almost as many in the first quarter. The high press was relentless, and it was successful, as India created numerous chances from winning the ball high up the field. In the first half, they missed three

such chances, through Abhishek, Shilanand Lakra and Dilpreet Singh.

After a goalless first quarter, India took the lead early on in the second, thanks to Abhishek’s superb finish. Playing his 100th game for India, he made good use of Shilanand’s fantastic effort to get the ball into the circle, and avoided any confusion with Manpreet Singh in getting to the ball first, and then rifling the ball into the roof of the net to give Maurits Visser no chance in the Dutch goal. However, just like in the game on Saturday, the Dutch were back level in no time, and just like in the game on Saturday, it was Thijs van Dam to

score the goal. However, this goal was all about Thierry Brinkman and his excellent dribbling down the baseline on the left flank, before his pass lobbed off an Indian stick into the path of van Dam, who made no mistake with the finish.

The Dutch went ahead early in the second through Tjep Hoedemaekers, who tapped in at the near post, but Krishan Pathak will feel he should’ve done better in saying that one. After that, there was consistent pressure on the Dutch goal from India, who forced five penalty corners in third quarter, but couldn’t convey any. It eventually was through a penalty corner that In-

dia drew level, as Jugraj Singh’s dragflick deflected off first runner Lars Balk and past Visser into the net. A minute later, India should’ve had the lead, as Lalit Upadhyay raced on to a loose ball and was one-on-one with Visser, but made a desperately poor decision to try and lob the goalkeeper, instead of laying a pass off for Sukhjeet Singh to roll into an empty net, or taking a more high percentage option with his shot.

India were made to pay for that glaring miss just a minute later, as Jip Janssen’s dragflick beat Suraj Karkera for sheer pace, and gave the Dutch the three points.

## SCO film festival to kick off in China’s Chongqing

BEIJING: The 2025 SCO (the Shanghai Cooperation Organization) Film Festival will take place from July 3 to 7 in Yongchuan District, southwest China’s Chongqing Municipality, highlighting the latest advancements in film technology and production across member states.

The upcoming film festival aims to promote people-to-people exchanges and cooperation between SCO member states, the municipal government, according to local media reports. The event will feature 11 major activities, including film screenings, cooperation forums, a film technology exhibition, and a gala concert. Ten awards will be presented at the event, including “best film” and “best director,” according to Qin Zhengui, deputy director of the China Film Administration.

The organizing committee has received 27 film submissions from SCO member states, with a curated selection to be screened during the event. Yongchuan, located in the western part of Chongqing, has emerged as a burgeoning hub for film technology innovation in recent years. The district is now home to over 100 film and TV enterprises and boasts cutting-edge production facilities, including a 3,000-square-meter virtual production stage and a 5,000-square-meter standardized soundstage. – Agencies

## ICCI gives mixed...

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the Chamber House on Tuesday, ICCI President Nasir Mansoor Qureshi praised the government’s allocation of funds for a cancer hospital in Islamabad and the significant reduction in stamp duty from 4% to 1%, calling these steps commendable. However, he expressed concern over the absence of long-term economic planning and stressed the need for policies that ensure economic stability. “The government must focus on sustainable industrial growth instead of primarily chasing tax targets,” he stated. Qureshi highlighted the missed opportunity of providing subsidized electricity to large-scale industries, which would have eased production costs and improved the business climate. He reiterated that the business community supports taxation, but it must be rational, realistic, and free from coercion.

## Extensive heatwave...

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private news channel, he advised citizens to stay hydrated and follow health guidelines to ensure their safety during the ongoing heatwave and avoid direct sun exposure to minimize health risks. PMD predicts a scorching day nationwide, however, He advised avoiding spicy and oily foods during the heatwave to prevent dehydration and heat-related discomfort. To combat the heatwave, PDMA Punjab has set up special counters in hospitals and ensured access to clean drinking water in Cholistan, says DG Irfan Ali Kathia.

## UK, other nations...

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Ben Gvir and Smotrich “have incited extremist violence and serious abuses of Palestinian human rights”, the foreign ministers of the five countries said in the joint statement. “These actions are not acceptable. This is why we have taken action now – to hold those responsible to account.” UK Foreign Secretary David Lammy said the pair have used “horrendous extremist language” and that he would “encourage the Israeli government to disavow and condemn that language”.

## Govt eyes 4.2% GDP growth, relief for salaried class

FROM PAGE 01  
“The entire nation demonstrated remarkable unity during the recent Pakistan-India conflict,” Aurangzeb said, extending congratulations to both military and civilian leadership for their “victorious response.” He noted that Pakistan’s prestige has risen in the international community, while emphasising the government’s renewed focus on economic development through national unity and determination. The minister highlighted that economic stability has been achieved through structural reforms, noting, “several measures have been implemented to improve the economy.” He credited recent policy actions for bringing “economic stabilisation through reform measures”. Referring to the recent economic situation, Aurangzeb noted that inflation has come down significantly, while remittances were \$36 billion in 10 months. “Those who were beating the drums about a mini-budget... no mini-budget has come, nor have any additional taxes been imposed,” he added. ‘Achievements under PM Shehbaz’

**FBR reforms**  
Recalling the achievements of Prime Minister Shehbaz-led government, he pointed out reforms in the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR), saying that Pakistan’s tax-to-GDP ratio was only 10%. “It was imperative to increase the ratio to 14%,” he said, adding that achieving the national targets was “impossible without the FBR’s transformation.”

Detailing the transformation, he listed the initiation of digital integration in Pakistan’s economy and tax system, digital production tracking, B2B e-invoicing, AI-based audit selection systems for sales and income tax, e-billing and faceless audits, and a new central control unit to centralise data collection.

**Energy reforms**  
Aurangzeb said the government reduced the electricity rate by up to 31% for industrial sector, renewed agreements with independent power producers (IPPs), closed down power plants based on furnace fuel with capacity of 3,000 MW, reorganised the National Grid Company of Pakistan, among other steps.

The minister revealed that the Reko Diq copper and gold mines represent a vital asset for Pakistan’s future, with an expected mining duration of 37 years. The project is projected to generate \$75 billion for the national economy, he added.

He further said that infrastructure development linking Port Qasim to

Gwadar via road and rail networks is already underway.

**Tariff reforms**

The minister said under the Comprehensive Tariff Reforms Package, custom duties will be eliminated within four years, regulatory duties will be phased out over five years and Fifth Schedule of the Customs Act 1969 will be abolished within five years. “Reforms aim to enhance Pakistan’s export competitiveness through streamlined tariff structures,” he added. Furthermore, he said that customs duties will now be limited to just four slabs: 0%, 5%, 10%, and 15%. The minister emphasised that these tariff reforms would be implemented gradually to ensure a smooth transition for businesses.

Key sectors set to benefit include pharmaceuticals, information technology, telecommunications, textiles, and engineering. “Our economy has been trapped in a cycle of debt for the past two decades,” Aurangzeb stated. “These reforms mark a decisive shift towards sustainable growth by lowering production costs and boosting exports.” The finance minister also revealed progress on capital market initiatives, including the recent issuance of Sukuk bonds through the Pakistan Stock Exchange and the completion of preparations for the country’s first Panda bond. Aurangzeb noted that Special Economic Zones (SEZs) alone cost the national exchequer more than Rs800 billion annually.

**GDP expected to grow 4.2%**

Speaking about the allocations in the Finance Bill 2026, the finance minister said the federal budget for fiscal year 2025-26 marks the beginning of a comprehensive strategy to build a competitive economy. Aurangzeb noted that the country’s GDP expected to grow 4.2% while inflation’s average ratio likely to remain at 7.5% in the next fiscal year. “Budget deficit to be 3.9% of country’s GDP while primary surplus will be 2.4%.” “This budget is designed to boost exports, strengthen foreign exchange reserves, address payment imbalances, and enhance economic productivity,” he said. The minister emphasised that the government aims to implement fundamental reforms to “transform the very DNA of our economy” through structural changes.

The budget deficit has been contained at 3.9% of GDP, while a primary surplus of 2.4% of GDP has been achieved – reflecting improved fiscal discipline. Meanwhile, the FBR has projected tax revenue of Rs14,131 billion for FY2025-26, representing an 18.7% increase from the current fiscal year, the finance minister said.

Of this amount, Rs8,206 billion will be allocated to provinces as their constitu-

tional share in federal taxes, he added. On the non-tax revenue front, the government has set an ambitious target of Rs5,147 billion, reflecting efforts to optimise income from state-owned enterprises and other non-tax sources. After accounting for provincial transfers, the federal government’s net revenue is estimated at Rs11,072 billion. The total federal expenditure has been budgeted at Rs17,573 billion, with Rs8,207 billion earmarked for debt servicing – a critical component that underscores the government’s commitment to fiscal responsibility. Defense remains the top priority with Rs2,550 billion allocated to safeguard national security.

Civil administration receives Rs971 billion for smooth governance operations. Pension expenditures are budgeted at Rs1,055 billion. Subsidies, particularly for the power sector, have been allocated Rs1,186 billion to ease the burden on consumers and support key economic sectors. Salient features

In his speech, FinMin Aurangzeb elaborated on the salient features of the budget, including economic growth, tax targets, PSDP allocations, and others.

- The estimated tax collection of the FBR would be Rs14,131 billion, with an 18.7% increase compared to the previous fiscal year. The part of provinces in the federal taxes would amount to Rs8,206 billion.
- Non-tax revenue target would be Rs5,147 billion.
- Federal government’s net income would be Rs11,072 billion.
- Overall expenditures of the federal government are estimated at Rs17,573 billion of which Rs8,207 billion will be allocated for the mark-up payment.
- Federal government’s ongoing expenses are estimated at Rs16,286 billion.
- Rs1,000 billion allocated for the federal government’s public sector development.
- Rs2,550 billion allocated for defence.
- Rs971 billion allocated for expenditures of civil administration.
- Rs1,055 billion allocated for pensions.
- Rs1,186 billion allocated for subsidies on electricity, and other sectors.
- Rs1,928 billion is allocated for grants for Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), Gilgit-Baltistan, and newly merged districts of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP).
- Coverage of BISP flagship initiatives would be increased and Rs10 million families will be reached under the Kafalat programme.
- Educational scholarship programme would also be expanded and Rs12 million children will be benefited.

- Centre proposes Rs716 billion allocation for BISP for the new fiscal year with an increase of 21% compared to previous year.
- Govt proposes to allocate funds from ongoing expenses autonomous regions, KP districts and Balochistan, including Rs140 billion AJK, Rs80 for GB, Rs80 billion for KP’s merged districts, and Rs18 for Balochistan.

**PSDP**

Referring to the sector-wise allocations, Aurangzeb noted that the Federal Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) serves as a critical vehicle for mobilising both domestic and foreign resources to drive growth across various economic sectors. Keeping in view the current fiscal constraints, the National Economic Council (NEC) has approved Rs4,224 billion for national development expenditure in FY2025-26. This includes:

- Rs1,000 billion for Federal PSDP
- Rs2,869 billion for Provincial Annual Development Programs (ADPs)
- Rs355 billion in self-financed investments by State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs)

According to the minister, the FY2025-26 Federal PSDP prioritises basic infrastructure projects, allocating over 60% of resources to ensure nationwide benefits.

In contrast, Provincial ADPs emphasise social sectors, dedicating more than 60% of their funds accordingly. This distribution pattern clearly reflects the implementation of responsibilities under the 18th Constitutional Amendment.

The development portfolio has been carefully aligned with flagship national programmes including, Uraan Pakistan and ES-5.

**Higher education**

According to the minister, the federal government has allocated Rs39.5 billion under the PSDP for the 128 ongoing and 12 new schemes of the Higher Education Commission (HEC) during the fiscal year 2025-26.

Among the ongoing schemes, an amount of Rs500 million is allocated for the Award of Allama Muhammad Iqbal 3000 scholarships to Afghan students, while Rs200 million have been reserved Construction of Academic Block, Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto Medical University (SZABMU), Islamabad. Similarly, Rs250 million have been allocated for the development of Main Campus, Bacha Khan University, Charsadda and Rs500 million for development of National University of Medical Sciences (NUMS), Rawalpindi. Furthermore, Rs611 million have been reserved for establishment of Kamyab Jawan Sports Academies (High Performance & Resource Centers) and

Youth Olympics – HEC, Rs558 million for establishment of University of Balistan at Skardu.

An amount of Rs100 million has also been allocated for Fulbright Scholarship Support Program HEC-USAID (Phase-III), while Rs2300 million are reserved for Overseas Scholarship for MS/MPhil leading to Ph.D. in selected fields (Phase III) – HEC, Rs3670 million allocated for Ph.D Scholarship Program under Pak-US Knowledge Corridor (Phase-I)(Revised).

Among new schemes, the government has allocated Rs50 million reserved for Allama Muhammad Iqbal Scholarships for Bangladesh, Uzbekistan, and Friendly Countries-HEC, Rs100 million for establishing a campus of Pakistan Institute of Fashion Design at Karachi. Similarly, Rs150 million have been earmarked for University Campus at Muzaffargarh and UVAS Campus Patokhi with Rs150 million.

Rs4.2 billion has been allocated for the development of the country’s agriculture sector, said Aurangzeb, adding that in the fiscal year 2025-26, special attention will be given to the revival of cotton crops and livestock alongside special training programmes.

Aurangzeb said that the Centre is taking concrete steps for the agriculture sector – contributing a significant portion to the country’s GDP – including the Green Pakistan Initiative for adopting improved and modern techniques of farming and expanding cultivable land.

It also focused on other initiatives, including capacity building, productivity, crop diversification, genetic improvement, post-harvest processes, and access to markets.

The allocation under the Public Sector Development Program (PSDP) will be spent on different uplift projects of the Ministry of National Food Security and Research in order to develop the local agriculture and livestock sector.

According to the PSDP 2025-26, an amount of over Rs1 billion was earmarked for five new and Rs3.2 billion for 10 ongoing development projects. The government allocated Rs585 million for the national programme for enhancing command areas in Barani areas of Pakistan and Rs500 million for the national oilseed development program.

Rs450 million has been allocated for the national agriculture productivity enhancement programme and Rs100 million for the Pakistan model agriculture research centre.

For ongoing schemes, the government has allocated Rs257 million for the Pak-Sar-Zameen card, Rs125 million for reviving cotton, Rs200 million for the financial incentive program for sustainable agri-business and aquaculture development.

**Circular Debt**

Referring to the energy sector’s circular debt, the finance minister said that the government has unveiled a comprehensive plan to address Pakistan’s

crippling energy sector circular debt, which ballooned to Rs2,393 billion by the end of last fiscal year.

“This unsustainable debt burden currently incurs additional financial charges ranging between 2% to 5.4% above KIBOR, with projected servicing costs reaching Rs454 billion in FY2025 alone,” he said.

“The federal government plans to replace existing expensive debt with Sharia-compliant bank financing through a strategic refinancing approach,” the minister said, adding that this “solution” will utilise the Debt Servicing Surcharge (DSS) not just for profit/markup payments but also for principal debt repayment – a significant departure from current practices.

**EV policy**

Meanwhile, the FinMin announced that the government has formulated a new Electric Vehicle (EV) Policy aimed at promoting the use of two- and three-wheeled electric vehicles (EVs) over traditional petrol and diesel-powered vehicles.

“This initiative seeks to reduce environmental pollution while decreasing the country’s reliance on imported fossil fuels,” he added.

Highlighting the key features of the EV Policy, he said that the policy encourages the manufacturing and sale of electric two- and three-wheelers by introducing a levy on petrol and diesel vehicles. The levy will be applied at varying rates based on engine power, affecting both local sales and imports of fossil fuel-based vehicles.

**Health sector**

The government has allocated Rs14.3 billion for completion of health sector projects under the PSDP for the fiscal year 2025-26.

According to the official budget document, the allocation was made with a strategic focus on improving healthcare infrastructure, disease surveillance, preventive medicine, maternal care, and emergency preparedness across the country.

An amount of Rs4 billion has been allocated for Jinnah Medical Complex and Research Centre, Islamabad, while Rs1 billion was allocated for the Prime Minister’s Hepatitis C Eradication programme.

The government has also allocated an amount of Rs2 billion for the development of the Integrated Disease Surveillance and Response System (IDSRS). Furthermore, Rs1.7 billion was allocated for the establishment of a cancer hospital in Islamabad.

An amount of Rs900 million has been allocated for the procurement of equipment for the federal capital’s cancer hospital in federal capital. Moreover, Rs900 million will be spent on the establishment of stroke intervention and expansion of critical care and cardiac facility at the Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS).



## Briefs

## Rupee sheds 03 paise against US Dollar

ISLAMABAD: The Rupee on Tuesday depreciated by 03 paise against the US Dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs 282.20 against the previous day's closing of Rs 282.17. However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs 282.6 and Rs 284.4, respectively. The price of the Euro decreased by 38 paise to close at Rs 321.64 against the last day's closing of Rs 322.02, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese yen came down by 01 paise and closed at Rs1.95, whereas a decrease of Rs 2.32 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs 380.39 as compared to the last day's closing of Rs 382.71. The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal increased by 01 paise each to close at Rs 76.83 and Rs 75.24, respectively.

## Gold price dips by Rs 6,100 per tola

ISLAMABAD: The price of 24 karat per tola gold decreased by Rs.6,100 and was traded at Rs.352,300 on Tuesday compared to its sale at Rs. 358,400 on last trading day. All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewelers Association reported. Drones The prices of 10 grams of 24 karat also decreased by Rs.5,230 to Rs.302,040 from Rs. 307,270 and for 10 grams of 22 Karat it went down by Rs4,794 to Rs.276,880 from Rs. 281,674. The rates of per tola and ten gram silver remained constant at Rs.3,745 and Rs.3,210 respectively. The price of gold in the international market went down by \$61 to \$3,339 from \$3,400, the Association reported.—APP

## PSX witnessed bullish trend, gains 383 points

ISLAMABAD: The 100-Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed bullish trend on Tuesday, gaining 383.44 points, showing positive change of 0.32 percent, closing at 122,024.44 points as compared to 121,641.00 points on the last trading day. Drones A total of 592,952,761 shares were traded during the day as compared to 854,617,208 shares the previous trading day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs 21.827 billion against Rs 25.793 billion on the last trading day. As many as 473 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 230 of them recorded gains and 200 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 43 companies remained unchanged. The three top trading companies were Energico PK with 61,375,370 shares at Rs 8.03 per share, K-Electric Limited with 59,081,829 shares at Rs 5.62 per share and Dewan Cement with 45,553,863 shares at Rs 15.52 per share.—APP

## UK civil servants told to quit if they disagree with Gaza policy

LONDON: UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office staff have been told to quit their jobs if they disagree with government policy on Gaza. More than 300 civil servants signed a letter sent to Foreign Secretary David Lammy last month, outlining concerns over UK arms sales and "complicity" in "stark ... disregard for international law" by the Israeli military in the Palestinian enclave. In a response to the letter, sent by the department's two most senior civil servants Nick Senior and Sir Oliver Robbins, signatories were told: "(If) your disagreement with any aspect of government policy or action is profound your ultimate recourse is to resign from the Civil Service.—APP

## India pushes back 'foreigners' into BD, sparking HRs concerns

"There is pressure from the Supreme Court to act on the expulsion of foreigners," Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma told the state assembly on Monday. "We have pushed back 303 people. These pushbacks will be intensified. We have to be more active and proactive to save the state

NEW DELHI: India has started to push people it considers illegal immigrants into neighbouring Bangladesh, but human rights activists say authorities are arbitrarily throwing people out of the country. Since May, the northeastern Indian state of Assam has "pushed back" 303 people into Bangladesh out of 30,000 declared as foreigners by various tribunals over the years, a top official said this week.

Such people in Assam are typically long-term residents with families and land in the state, which is home to tens of thousands of families tracing their roots to Muslim-majority Bangladesh.

Activists say many of them and their families are often wrongly classified as foreigners in mainly Hindu India and are too poor to chal-

lenge tribunal judgements in higher courts. Some activists, who did not want to be named for fear of reprisal, said only Muslims had been targeted in the expulsion drive. An Assam government spokesperson did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Assam, which has a 260 km (160 mile) border with Bangladesh, started sending back people last month who had been declared as foreigners by its Foreigners Tribunals. Such a move is politically popular in Assam, where Bengali language speakers with possible roots in Bangladesh compete for jobs and resources with local Asamese speakers.

"There is pressure from the Supreme Court to act on the expulsion of foreigners," Assam Chief Minister

Himanta Biswa Sarma told the state assembly on Monday. "We have pushed back 303 people. These pushbacks will be intensified. We have to be more active and proactive to save the state."

He was referring to the Supreme Court asking Assam in February why it had not moved on deporting, opens new tab declared foreigners.

Bangladesh's foreign affairs adviser, Touhid Hossain, did not immediately reply to an email seeking comment. Last week, he told reporters that people were being sent to his country from India and that the government was in touch with New Delhi over it.

Aman Wadud, an Assam-based lawyer who routinely fights citizenship cases and is now a member of the main opposition Con-

gress party, said the government was "arbitrarily throwing people out of the country". "There is a lot of panic on the ground - more than ever before," he said. Some brought back

Sarma said no genuine Indian citizens will be expelled. But he added that up to four of the people deported were brought back to India because appeals challenging their non-Indian status were being heard in court.

One of them was Khairul Islam, a 51-year-old former government school teacher who was declared a foreigner by a tribunal in 2016. He spent two years in an Assam detention centre and was released on bail in August 2020.

He said police picked him up on May 23 from his home and took him to

a detention centre, from where he and 31 others were rounded up by Indian border guards and loaded into a van, blindfolded and hands tied.

"Then, 14 of us were put onto another truck. We were taken to a spot along the border and pushed into Bangladesh," he said. "It was terrifying. I've never experienced anything like it. It was late at night. There was a straight road, and we all started walking along it." Islam said residents of a Bangladeshi village then called the Border Guard Bangladesh, who then pushed the group of 14 into the "no man's land between the two countries".

"All day we stood there in the open field under the harsh sun," he said.

Later, the group was tak-

en to a Bangladesh guards camp while Islam's wife told police in Assam that as his case was still pending in court, he should be brought back.

"After a few days, I was suddenly handed back to Indian police," he said. "That's how I made my way back home. I have no idea what happened to the others who were with me, or where they are."

It is not only Assam that is acting against people deemed to be living illegally in the country. Police in the western city of Ahmedabad said they have identified more than 250 people "confirmed to be Bangladeshi immigrants living illegally here".

"The process to deport them is in progress," said senior police officer Ajit Rajan.—Agencies

## Israel seizes aid boat bound for Gaza

PORT OF ASHDOD: A Gaza-bound aid boat reached Israel's Ashdod port on Monday after being intercepted by Israeli forces, preventing the dozen activists on board including Swedish campaigner Greta Thunberg from reaching the blockaded Palestinian territory. An foreign news agency photographer said that the Madleen, which organisers said was intercepted in international waters overnight, reached the port north of Gaza at around 8:45 pm (1745 GMT), escorted by the Israeli navy. The Madleen set sail from Italy on June 1 to raise awareness of food shortages in the Gaza Strip, which the United Nations has called the "hungriest place on Earth". After more than 20 months of war, triggered by Palestinian militant group Hamas's October 7, 2023 attack on Israel, the UN has warned that Gaza's entire population is at risk of famine. At around 4:02 am (0102 GMT) on Monday, Israeli troops "forcibly intercepted" the vessel as it approached Gaza, the Freedom Flotilla Coalition said. "If you see this video, we have been intercepted and kidnapped," Thunberg said in pre-recorded footage shared by the coalition. Video from the group shows the activists with their hands up as Israeli forces boarded the vessel, with one of them saying nobody was injured prior to the interception. Israel's foreign ministry, in a post on social media, said "all the passengers of the 'selfie yacht' are safe and unharmed", adding it expected the activists to return to their home countries.—APP

## CDA chief reviews sectors development progress

ISLAMABAD: A meeting was held at the CDA Headquarters under the chairmanship of Chairman CDA, Chief Commissioner of Islamabad and Director General of Civil Defense, Muhammad Ali Randhawa. The meeting was attended by CDA Member Administration, Member Estate, Member Engineering, Member Finance, Member Planning, Deputy Commissioner Islamabad and other senior CDA officers. The meeting reviewed the progress made so far on sector development, particularly in Sectors E-12, C-14, C-15, C-16, and I-12 as well as the projects on Shaheen Chowk and Kashmir Chowk, remodeling of the Faizabad Interchange, the conversion of the CDA Nursery into 'Gardenia Hub', the Blue Area Parking Plaza, the construction of the Police Academy and the development of parking facilities for employees of the Pak Secretariat. Chairman CDA stated that improving residential facilities for the citizens of Islamabad is CDA's top priority. He said that while the CDA is making full efforts for the development and prosperity of various sectors, it is also planting environment friendly trees across the city, upgrading all major roads and constructing underpasses at various locations to resolve traffic issues and provide better travel facilities to citizens. He added that the CDA is not only taking practical steps to improve all parks and playgrounds but is also actively working on their uplift. He directed that permanent beautiful lights be gradually installed on all major roads in Islamabad.—APP

## Ukrainian woman searches for husband lost in action two years ago

CHERNIHIV: When gaunt Ukrainian soldiers dismount from buses as part of prisoner swaps with Russia, Mariia Pynlyk tries to find out anything she can about her missing husband from the freed men, and hopes, just maybe, that he will be among them. Holding up a photograph of Dmytro Pynlyk, lost in action in early 2023, she has many questions. What happened to his unit when it was ambushed by Russian forces? Could he be captured by Russia? Could he eventually be released? The mass prisoner swap last month was an opportunity for people like her to ask troops just out of Russian captivity about missing loved ones who they believe, or simply hope, are prisoners of war. The alternative is unthinkable. "I hold out great hope that someone has heard something, seen something," Pynlyk, 29, told Reuters at a recent exchange in May, flanked by other relatives of those missing in action. "My son and I are waiting for (his) dad to come home. Hope dies last. God willing, it'll all be okay and dad will come back." Precise numbers for soldiers missing in action are not made public. For Ukrainians, and for Russians on the other side of the conflict, it can be hard to find out even basic information. Pynlyk says she has written to government agencies and Russian authorities and learned almost nothing.

Ukrainian officials say more than 70,000 Ukrainians have been registered missing since 2022, when Russia launched its full-scale invasion. The majority are from the military but the figure also includes civilians. Another 12,000 have been removed from the list after being identified among the dead or returned in exchanges. Petro Yatsenko, a spokesman for the Coordination Council that arranges prisoner swaps from the Ukrainian side, said Russia had never notified Kyiv which soldiers it is holding prisoner. Ukraine collects that data by other means as best it can, he said. Pynlyk and others like her share information in online chat groups and use it to try to piece together what happened. "Misfortune brought us together," she said. "After two years of this, we're like a family." LAST PHONE CALL Dmytro Pynlyk, an electrician by trade, was drafted into the army in late 2022. He phoned home often so that his wife did not worry but last called on their son Artem's third birthday on Feb. 27, 2023. He was deployed from Kharkiv region toward Bakhmut, a small city that later fell to Russian forces after fierce fighting. His unit's convoy was caught in a Russian ambush, Mariia Pynlyk said she had learned.—APP



NIICE: Ambassador Mumtaz Zahra Baloch is leading the Pakistan delegation to the Third United Nations Ocean Conference (UNOC3) being held in Nice, France.

## Arizona State varsity partners with NIT, Lahore to enter Pakistan

LAHORE, Pakistan : In a major development for Pakistan's higher education sector, Arizona State University (ASU), ranked among the top institutions in the United States, has partnered exclusively with the newly established National Institute of Technology (NIT) in Lahore. This milestone collaboration, formalized through the ASU-Cintana Alliance, marks ASU's first official presence in Pakistan and a new era of globally integrated education. Scheduled to commence academic operations in October 2025, NIT has been granted its federal charter by the Government of Pakistan on January 25, 2025. With this, NIT becomes the country's first institution to offer dual degree programs conferred jointly by NIT and ASU, coupled with access to a global consortium of over 30 universities across six continents through the ASU-Cintana Alliance. The signing ceremony was held at ASU's Tempe campus on April 16, 2025, in partnership with Cintana Education, ASU's global implementation arm focused on delivering world-class learning experiences internationally. Founded by University of London trained lawyer Shahzeb Awan and Harvard MBA Jahanzeb Burana, NIT will open its flagship campus near DHA Phase 7 in Lahore, launching initially with two academic divisions: • The School of Business Studies • The School of Digital Technologies Appointed as Vice Chancellor, Dr. Faisal Bari, a respected scholar in Pakistani and international academia, will lead NIT with a vision to establish it as a Tier 1 institution focused on innovation, research excellence, and industry relevance. "Some journeys begin with ambition," said Co-Founder Shahzeb Awan. "Mine began with loss, guided by faith and powered by a mission to serve." "NIT is set to redefine the higher education landscape of the country and be a platform for nurturing world-class talent," remarked Co-Founder Jahanzeb Burana. By combining globally aligned curricula, international student exchange opportunities, and industry driven certifications, NIT aims to equip the next generation of Pakistani students with the tools to succeed in today's innovation driven global economy.—DNA

## Trump's cuts devastating for vulnerable women worldwide: UN

UNITED NATIONS, United States: The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) has faced budget cuts before, but the impact of President Donald Trump's policies has been even more "devastating" for reproductive health worldwide, chief Natalia Kanem told AFP. The agency has been targeted by US conservatives since the Kemp-Kasten Amendment's enactment in 1985 by Congress, when the administration of then president Ronald Reagan rallied against China's population policies, accusing Beijing of promoting forced abortions and sterilizations. All subsequent Republican presidencies have cut US funding to UNFPA, and the second Trump administration is no exception. "We've had over \$330 million worth of projects ended," virtually overnight, in "some of the hardest hit regions of the world" like Afghanistan, Kanem said in an interview coinciding with the release of the UNFPA's annual report Tuesday. "So yes, we are suffering." Kanem pointed to the Za'atari refugee camp in Jordan as an example, where over the years more than 18,000 pregnancies were delivered by "heroic midwives" who "conducted these over 18,000 deliveries without a single maternal death, which you know, in a crisis situation is extraordinary. "Those maternity wards today have closed. The funding cuts immediately have meant that those midwives are no longer able to do their jobs," Kanem said. Although it is too soon to estimate the precise impacts of the US cuts, they will inevitably result in increased maternal mortality and more unintended pregnancies, according to Kanem. "What's different this time for UNFPA is that our ecosystem of other reproductive health actors who might be able to fill in for us," Kanem said, adding they are "reeling from huge impact of having their funding denied." The Trump administration has slashed many such external aid programs. "So it is very lamentable that this year, to me, has been drastically worse than ever before, precisely because now everybody is caught up in the whirlwind." "The withdrawal of the United States from the funding arena for reproductive health has been devastating," Kanem said.—APP

## Macron calls for release of Gaza activists as thousands demonstrate in French cities

NICE: French President Emmanuel Macron called on Israel to quickly free activists, including Greta Thunberg, on a boat that was seized Monday as it headed for Gaza in an operation that sparked angry protests in several European cities. Tens of thousands of people staged rallies after Israel stopped the boat, the Madleen, that was carrying 12 activists. In France, rallies in Paris and at least five other cities were called by left wing



parties. Jean-Luc Melenchon, head of the France Unbowed (LFI) party, called the seizure of the Gaza boat by the Israeli military "international piracy." In Switzerland, several hundred people blocked train stations in Geneva and Lausanne to protest Israel's military operations in Gaza, media reports said. Some 300 protesters carrying Palestinian flags occupied two tracks at Geneva's main station for about an hour, leading to delays and cancellations, the reports said. A similar protest was staged in nearby Lausanne, where police cleared the tracks. Macron, meanwhile, urged the immediate liberation of French nationals among the 12 activists on the vessel.—DNA

## KP launches interest-free loan scheme for erstwhile Fata

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has launched a long-term interest-free microfinance scheme for entrepreneurs to support small businesses and improve the livelihoods in the merged districts. A press release on Thursday, said the interest-free loan, which spans 13 years (2021-2034), has already made substantial progress, with 66,557 individuals benefitting from the program so far, while 22,152 more are currently receiving financial support under the scheme. The programme provides interest-free loans ranging from Rs25,000 to Rs75,000, with a flexible repayment period of up to 36 months. This

structure has been designed to ensure that recipients can repay the loan in easy installments without the burden of interest, making it especially accessible for low-income and underprivileged populations. The project is being implemented by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Small Industries Development Board (SIDB), with a total allocation of Rs2,007 billion. Operational execution is being carried out in partnership with Akhuwat Foundation Pakistan, one of the country's most trusted microfinance institutions. Drones Currently, 36 branches of Akhuwat are functioning in various merged districts, enabling local residents to apply

for loans close to home. The scheme caters to a wide range of economic sectors. Beneficiaries have used the funds to start new businesses, expand existing enterprises, purchase necessary equipment and machinery, and invest in agriculture and livestock development. This multi-sectoral approach ensures that people from all walks of life, particularly those from rural and economically marginalized backgrounds, can benefit from financial inclusion. Sikandar Shah, Monitoring and Evaluation Officer of the SIDB, recently conducted an official visit to the Akhuwat branch of offices located in Bajaur district, DI Khan and Lakki Marwat. During his visit, he observed

the implementation and progress of the Interest-Free Microfinance Scheme for Entrepreneurship Development in the merged areas. The official acknowledged its impact on the socioeconomic uplift of the region. He commended the program as a cornerstone of inclusive development in the newly merged districts, recognizing its role in empowering local communities by providing accessible financial resources to aspiring entrepreneurs. The initiative not only promotes economic participation at the grassroots level but also reflects the provincial government's broader vision of fostering self-reliance, employment generation, and sustainable eco-

nomical growth. This scheme, through its support to small businesses, agriculture, and livestock sectors, is paving the way for long-term prosperity and financial independence in the region. Local beneficiaries have expressed appreciation for the initiative, noting that the scheme has not only provided them with financial support but also with the confidence and tools needed to build a better future for their families and communities. Sikandar Shah expressed the hope that with continued implementation and monitoring, the scheme was expected to transform thousands of lives and contribute to the socioeconomic uplift of the merged districts in the coming years.—DNA



## Briefs

## Kyiv and Odesa under 'massive' drone attacks

Buildings and cars in several districts were burning and debris fell near a school. No casualties were immediately reported

KYIV: Ukraine's capital, Kyiv and the port city of Odesa came under "massive" drone attacks from Russia early Tuesday, Ukrainian officials said. "Stay in shelters! The massive attack on the capital continues," Mayor Vitali Klitschko said on Telegram. An AFP journalist in central Kyiv heard at least a dozen of explosions and gunfire, as air defences tried to down the drones. Buildings and cars in several districts were burning and debris fell near a school. No casualties were immediately reported. Russian strikes on Odesa hit maternity and medical facilities that had been evacuated, local officials said, reporting no casualties there. "The enemy massively attacked Odesa with strike drones. There is damage to civilian infrastructure and fires," Odesa Governor Oleg Kiper wrote on Telegram. "The Russians hit a maternity hospital, an emergency medical ward and residential buildings," Moscow has kept up its attacks on Ukraine despite efforts by the United States to broker a ceasefire. — APP

## Several dead after gunfire in Austrian school: police

VIENNA: Several people died on Tuesday after a suspected shooter opened fire in a southeastern Austria school, including the suspected attacker, Austrian broadcaster ORF quoted the interior ministry as saying. "Currently, a police operation is underway... The reason for the deployment was that gunshots were heard in the building," the police said on X, confirming the attack in Graz. According to Austrian public broadcaster ORF, citing police, a student was behind the shooting, which led to the school's evacuation. Several serious injuries included students and teachers, according to police spokesman Fritz Grundnig quoted by the media. Police and interior ministry officials could not immediately be reached by AFP. Attacks in public are rare in the Alpine nation of almost 9.2 million people. In February, a stabbing left a teenager dead and five other people injured in southern Austria, with a 23-year-old Syrian asylum seeker held. — APP

## 55 dead in KP during Eid holidays

PESHAWAR: At least 55 people lost their lives in various incidents across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa during the Eid-ul-Adha holidays, according to a report released by Rescue 1122. The fatalities resulted from road traffic accidents, fires, drowning incidents, and cases involving gunfire. Rescue officials stated here on Tuesday that those injured in the incidents were promptly transported to hospitals for medical treatment. The highest number of deaths was reported in Mardan with 14 fatalities, followed by Peshawar with 13. Haripur recorded six deaths, while Nowshera, Hangu, and Kurram reported three deaths each. One death each was reported in Dera Ismail Khan, Abbottabad, Bannu, Buner, and Battagram. Rescue 1122 Director General Shah Fahad noted that among the reported cases, 1,400 were medical emergencies, 349 were road traffic accidents, 112 fire-related incidents, 82 recovery operations, 50 crime-related emergencies, and six drowning cases. In Peshawar alone, a total of 418 incidents were reported during the holiday period. Rescue teams successfully transferred 431 patients to medical facilities. These included 43 road traffic accidents, 338 medical emergencies, 20 fire incidents, eight shooting and 11 recovery operations. — APP



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif chairs cabinet meeting on Tuesday. — DNA

## Pakistan pushes for promoting harmony to ensure global peace

"Let us use this moment to renew our collective resolve—to listen before we speak, to connect before we separate, and to affirm that peace among nations begins with respect among peoples," Ambassador Asim Ahmad, permanent representative of Pakistan to the UN, said

DNA

UNITED NATIONS: In a world marked by political tensions, forced displacement, and persistent inequalities, Pakistan has fervently called for collective efforts to promote mutual respect, understanding and harmony among civilizations to accomplish global peace. "Let us use this moment to renew our collective resolve—to listen before we speak, to connect before we separate, and to affirm that peace among nations begins with respect among peoples," Ambassador Asim Ahmad, permanent representative of Pakistan to the UN, said at the thematic dialogue on "Promoting Dialogue among Civilizations, Strengthening Global Solidarity and Cooperation." The event was organized by the Permanent Mission of China and the UN Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) in collaboration with Egypt, Peru, Spain, and Uzbekistan, focusing on the importance of exchanges and mutual learning among diverse civilizations. "We believe that only through meaningful engagement and mutual learning can we overcome prejudice and build lasting trust," the Pakistani envoy said. In a video message broadcast at the event, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi highlighted the role of dialogue among civiliza-

tions as a bond of peace, a driver for development, and a bridge of friendship. Chinese Ambassador Fu Cong, who moderated the dialogue, underscored the role of language and cultural exchange in fostering understanding and cooperation between nations. In his message, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres stressed that the rich diversity of civilizations is a force to promote mutual understanding and global solidarity. "Today, that mission is more urgent than ever. Where dialogue is missing, ignorance fills the void." The UNAOC head, Miguel Moratinos, said that "dialogue among civilizations is not only relevant, but essential to building a more peaceful, just, and united world." In his remarks Ambassador Asim, the Pakistani ambassador, said, "Today's dialogue comes at a time when the world is confronted with deepening divides—social, cultural, and geopolitical." Pakistan, he said, welcomes the emphasis placed on the values of pluralism, inclusion, and peaceful coexistence—principles which lie at the heart of the country's foreign policy and multilateral engagement. "Our endorsement of General Assembly Resolution A/RES/78/286, designating 10 June as the International Day for Dialogue among Civilizations, is rooted in the belief that humanity's shared heritage is strengthened through exchange and empathy". Pakistan, he said, concerned by the rise in intolerance, discrimination, and the deliberate spread of misinformation that fractures societies and undermines global solidarity. "Islamophobia, in particular, continues to endanger social cohesion and peace." In this context, the Pakistani envoy said the promotion of dialogue is not just an

ideal—it is an imperative. Pakistan, he said, has consistently championed the cause of inter-civilizational dialogue and interfaith harmony. "We support all platforms, including the Alliance of Civilizations, and global civilization initiatives that advance these objectives in a spirit of equality and inclusion," the Pakistan envoy added.

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## Donald Trump deploys Marines as tensions rise over protests

LOS ANGELES: US President Donald Trump on Monday ordered active-duty Marines into Los Angeles, vowing those protesting immigration arrests would be "hit harder" than ever. The extraordinary mobilization of 700 full-time professional military personnel — who join hundreds of National Guard troops already there — looked likely to stoke tensions in a city with a huge Latino population. California Governor Gavin Newsom slammed the move as "deranged." "US Marines have served honorably across multiple wars in defense of democracy," Newsom posted on X.

"They shouldn't be deployed on American soil facing their own countrymen to fulfill the deranged fantasy of a dictatorial President. This is un-American." The deployment came after demonstrators took over streets in Downtown LA on Sunday, torching cars and looting stores in ugly scenes that saw law enforcement responding with tear gas and rubber bullets. "The people are causing the problems are professional agitators and insurrectionists," Trump told reporters in Washington. On social media, he said protesters spat at troops and if they continued to do so, "I promise you they will be hit harder than they

have ever been hit before. Such disrespect will not be tolerated!" One small business-owner whose property was graffitied was supportive of the strongarm tactics. "I think it's needed to stop the vandalism," she told AFP, declining to give her name. "Everybody has the right to protest, but do it the right way. Don't vandalize or hurt your own town because you're hurting people that are trying to make a living." Others were horrified. "They're meant to be protecting us, but instead, they're like, being sent to attack us," Kelly Diemer, 47, told media. "This is not a democracy anymore." — Agencies

## ‘Chinese defence stocks soar as Pak eyes major weapons deal’

Pakistan plans to buy J-35 jets, KJ-500 aircraft, HQ-19 missiles as part of weapons deal

CHINESE defence companies' shares rallied significantly on Monday following Pakistan's announcement of its intent to procure advanced fighter jets and other sophisticated weaponry from the Asian power, Bloomberg reported, fuelling investor enthusiasm in the sector. AVIC Shenyang Aircraft Company, the manufacturer of China's cutting-edge J-35 stealth fighter jet — identified as a centerpiece of the prospective arms package — saw its shares surge by their daily 10% limit in Shanghai.

This marked the third consecutive session of gains for the company, underscoring strong market reaction to the potential deal. The positive sentiment extended across the broader Chinese defence industry, with other key players also witnessing substantial gains. Aerospace Nanhu Electronic Information Technology Co, for instance, saw its shares jump by as much as 15%, leading a broader rally among defence-related stocks. The Pakistani government publicly confirmed its intentions via a social media post on Friday, detailing plans to acquire 40 J-35 fifth-generation fighter jets, alongside KJ-500 airborne early warning and control (AEW and C) aircraft, and HQ-19 ballistic missile defence systems. China's Ministry of Defence didn't respond to a request for comment. Shares of Chinese arms makers have been on the rise since Pakistan last month claimed that Chinese J-10Cs helped shooting down six Indian fighters, including French-made Rafale aircraft. India has downplayed Pakistan's claims about the effectiveness of weaponry deployed from China and other countries, saying that the Indian military was able to conduct precision airstrikes deep in Pakistani territory, Bloomberg reported. The J-35 sale to Pakistan would mark China's first export of the fifth-generation jet, which has advanced stealth capabilities for penetrating the airspace of an adversary. The fighter was developed by Shenyang Aircraft Corporation and publicly unveiled at the 2024 Zhuhai Airshow. — Agencies

## Sardar Yousaf sets pace for 2026 Hajj after 2025 success

MAKKAH AL MUKARRAMAH: Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Sardar Muhammad Yousaf while terming Hajj 2025 an exemplary success, announced on Tuesday that preparations for Hajj 2026 have started, as the Saudi Hajj policy and timeline for next year have been received to ensure timely arrangements. Addressing a press conference here along with Secretary Dr Syed Ata Ur Rehman and DG Pakistan Hajj Mission Abdul Wahab Soomro, the Minister said congratulated the nation and the Hujaj on successful completion of Hajj 2025. He said significant improvements in pilgrim facilities and a drastic reduction in complaints have been witnessed this year. Attributing to the excellent arrangements for Hujaj, he said 72% decrease was observed in complaints as compared to the last year. Sardar Muhammad Yousaf extended heartfelt congratulations to all Pakistani pilgrims for successfully completing their spiritual journey. This was possible owing to the special interest and leadership of Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, he said. He also expressed profound gratitude to the Saudi leadership especially King Salman bin Abdulaziz and Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman, and the Saudi Ministry of Hajj and Umrah, for their exemplary arrangements and historical hospitality



extended to over 115,000 Pakistani pilgrims. The Minister said that Pakistan's DG Hajj Abdul Wahab Soomro has received an "Excellence Award" from the Saudi Minister of Hajj and Umrah, Dr. Tawfiq bin Fawzan Al-Rabiah for making outstanding Hajj arrangements and for his outstanding and innovative leadership. "DG Soomro was ranked first among seven heads to receive the accolade, a testament to his 'dynamic and leadership qualities' in coordinating with Saudi institutions." Shedding light over unprecedented improvements in pilgrim facilities this year, Sardar Yousaf said for the first time in the history of the government Hajj scheme, air-conditioned were added along air coolers to the tents, gypsum board walls, sofa-cum-beds, overhead shelves for luggage and shoe racks were introduced in Mina. The Hujaj also enjoyed five-time quality meals daily (three times fresh and two-time packed) in Mina besides juices, tea, mineral water and ice cream in Mina and Arafat. He said the pilgrims were provided with 'B-category facilities' at a 'D-category fee.' Sardar Muhammad Yousaf said despite disruptions caused by the Pakistan-India conflict, the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Pakistan Hajj Mission, in collaboration with Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) ensured the timely arrival of all pilgrims. He said some 1,140 AC buses were hired for smooth and timely transportation of Hujaj to Mina adding that 73% of total pilgrims used the Mashair train, while 27% travelled by air-conditioned buses for Arafat, Muzdalifah and Jamarat. — DNA

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