



Any military escalation involving Iran could destabilise Gulf region, SA, Western Asia: President Zardari



NA speaker accepts 2024 resignation of BNP-M chief Akhtar Mengal



Federal Minister Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh welcomes Saudi Kyan delegation

Founded By: (Late) Rehmat Khan

ABC CERTIFIED

Email: editor.peakpoint@gmail.com Website: www.peakpoint.pk

Executive Group Editor Arif Mehmood Khan



Thursday 12 February 2026 Shaban 23, 1447 A.H VOI No: 06 Issue No. 17 Pages 4 Rs. 20

PM Shehbaz announces compensation for those martyred, injured in suicide attack on imambargah Islamabad

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday announced compensation for those martyred and injured in the suicide attack on an imambargah in Islamabad last week.

The premier made the announcement while visiting the site of the attack.

On February 6, a suicide bomber ripped through the Friday congregation at the Imambargah Qasri-Khadijatul Kubra on the outskirts of Islamabad. At least 38 people were killed in the incident and more than 150 were injured.

During the visit, PM Shehbaz announced a sum of Rs 10 million for Oun Abbas, who resisted the suicide attacker; Rs5m for each

martyr; Rs3m for those critically injured and under treatment at the hospital; and Rs1m for those with minor injuries who had been discharged.

Speaking on the occasion, PM Shehbaz said, "These terrorists have no religion, and they have crossed all the limits of cruelty."

Talking to the affected families, he said the entire nation was in a state of grief and saddened over the tragic incident, which resulted in the martyrdom of elders and kids while scores of others were injured.

He termed the incident the "worst kind of barbaric act". PM Shehbaz said that all religious leaders had strongly condemned the incident with unity and praised them for foiling the nefarious designs of the enemies.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif offers Fatcha for the martyrs of suicide attack on Inman Bargah Khadija-ul-Kubra.

Trump recounts India-Pakistan standoff, claims 10 aircraft shot down

PEAK POINT



WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump has now raised the tally of aircraft shot down during the May 2025 conflict between Pakistan and India to 10, claiming that he

played a decisive role in preventing a major nuclear war between two countries.

In an interview with an American news channel, Trump said he used tariffs as a strategic tool to de-escalate tensions between the two nuclear-armed neighbors.

He asserted that he had ended eight wars, at least six of which were halted due to tariff threats.

"I told them if you don't stop the war, I will impose tariffs," Trump said, adding that he did not want to see people dying.

According to the US President, the situation between India and Pakistan was extremely tense and could have escalated into a nuclear confrontation. "Like India and Pakistan would've been a nuclear war in my opinion. They were really going at it. Ten planes were shot down. They were going at it," he added. Trump further stated that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif appreciated.

Khawaja Asif calls Achakzai's remarks on armed forces 'irresponsible'

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Defense Minister Khawaja Asif condemned a statement made by Opposition Leader Mahmood Khan Achakzai regarding the security forces, calling it 'irresponsible.' Speaking in the National Assembly, Khawaja Asif said that Achakzai had claimed the Pakistan Army is "an army of four districts," which he described as an extremely irresponsible remark. "This is not something one would expect from Mahmood Khan Achakzai, and his statement has caused distress," he added. He emphasized that while Achakzai is entitled to his views, he should avoid making attacks. "The Pakistan Army



does not belong to any single province or district. In this war against terrorism, we suffer losses every day, and over 200 terrorists have been eliminated in Balochistan alone," the minister said. Khawaja Asif further stated, "Islam does not permit bloodshed. Our soldiers' lives are constantly at risk as they uphold their

oath with their own blood. We politicians may switch parties, but these martyrs never changed their loyalties." He added, "We fight for our personal interests and power. If I were to cross a line drawn in blood, I would not have the right to sit in this house."

"Punjabi laborers are killed based on their

identity cards, but this is not labeled as provincialism. We politicians may switch parties, but these martyrs never changed their loyalties." He added, "We fight for our personal interests and power. If I were to cross a line drawn in blood, I would not have the right to sit in this house."

Barrister Salman Safdar submits report on Imran Khan to SC

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Barrister Salman Safdar, appointed as friend of the court, has submitted his report to the Supreme Court following his meeting with PTI founder Imran Khan.

A day earlier, the Supreme Court had appointed Salman Safdar to meet Imran Khan and present a report before the court. The barrister held a three-hour meeting with the former prime minister. Speaking to the media outside the Supreme Court.

PMD says 'fair chance' of sighting Ramadan moon on Feb 18

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) has stated that there is a "fair chance" of sighting the new moon of Ramadan on the evening of February 18, it emerged on Wednesday. According to a letter by the department's Climate Data Processing Centre (CDCPC) in Karachi to the Ministry of Religious Affairs, dated January 26, the new moon of Ramadan "will be born on the crossing conjunction point of 5:01pm on February 17".

"According to astronomical parameters.

SBP governor expects broader recovery than IMF forecast

PEAK POINT

KARACHI: State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) Governor Jameel Ahmad expects the economy to grow as much as 4.75 per cent this fiscal year, pushing back against a recent downgrade by the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

In written responses to Reuters, the SBP chief argued the recovery is broader and more durable than headline export data suggest.

The central bank raised its FY26 growth forecast to 3.75-4.75pc at its January meeting, 0.5 percentage points higher than its previous range, despite a contraction in exports in the first half of the year and a widening trade deficit.

The governor said differences in projections were not unusual and

reflected timing issues, including the IMF's incorrect conditions had eased



poration of flood-related assessments in its latest outlook.

"All these sources and indicators, along with FY26-Q1 data, point to a broad-based recovery in all three sectors of the economy," he said. He added that the SBP believed that agricultural activity had remained resilient despite floods and "it is even performing better than its tar-

gets". He added that financial conditions had eased

significantly following a cumulative 1,150-basis-point cut in the policy rate since June 2024, and that the full impact was still feeding through.

This, he said, was supporting growth while preserving price and economic stability. The SBP last month held its benchmark rate at 10.5pc, defying expectations for a cut.

The divergence with the

IMF comes at a delicate moment for Pakistan, which is emerging from a balance-of-payments crisis under a \$7 billion IMF programme.

Export drag, remittance cushion Pakistan's previous growth spurts have often led to currency pressure and a decline in foreign exchange reserves, making the sustainability of the current rebound a key question for investors.

Ahmad said high-frequency indicators and 6pc growth in large-scale manufacturing in July-November point to strengthening demand, while agriculture has remained resilient despite last year's floods, he said.

While exports declined in the first half of the fiscal year, Ahmad said the fall reflected low global prices and border.

Iran says it will not negotiate over its missile capabilities



PEAK POINT

IRAN: Iran's missile capabilities are its red line and are not a subject to be negotiated, an adviser to Iran's supreme leader said on Wednesday, as Tehran and Washington eye a new round of talks to avert conflict. US and Iranian diplomats held indirect talks last week in Oman, amid a regional naval buildup by the US threatening Iran. "The Islamic republic's missile capabilities are non-negotiable," Ali Shamkhani said, according to state media, while appearing in a march commemorating the 47th anniversary of the Islamic Revolution. Washington has long sought to extend talks on Iran's nuclear capabilities to cover its missile programme as well. Iran has said it is prepared to discuss curbs on its nuclear programme.



SPORTS



Pacer Naseem Shah sold for Rs86.5m in highest bid at first-ever PSL player auction

PEAK POINT ISLAMABAD: The first-ever player auction for the 11th edition of the Pakistan Super League (PSL) was held in Lahore on Wednesday, with fast bowler Naseem Shah sold to Rawalpindi for Rs86.5 million — the highest bid of the auction.

The auction ended after several unsold players were snapped up by the eight franchises. Earlier rounds of bidding saw major players auctioned off, including Fakhar Zaman, David Warner and Muhammad Amir.

Last month, the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) announced that the upcoming season of the country's premier cricket league would adopt an auction model, replacing the previous draft system.

Islamabad United The auction began with bidding on all-rounders, starting with Faheem Ashraf at the base price of Rs42m, with Islamabad United putting in the final bid at Rs85m.

The team also scored New Zealand cricketer Mark Chapman after they bid Rs70m against Peshawar Zalmi's Rs68.5m.

Mohammad Waseem Jr joined the team at the winning bid of Rs41m — a marked increase from his base price at

22m — against Quetta Gladiators. The team secured Mir Hamza Sajjad as well at a winning bid of Rs7m.

Islamabad United also bagged Sameer Minhas at the bid of Rs19m after back-and-forth bidding against Quetta Gladiators. Sameen Gul also joined the team.

All-rounder Imad Wasim, who was unsold in the prior rounds of bidding, was secured for Rs22m. He was followed by England's Richard Gleeson, who was snapped up with an Rs11m bid.

Batter Haider Ali was secured for Rs15m after back-and-forth bidding with Sialkot.

Hyderabad and Lahore bid for bowler Mohammad Hasnain, before the latter bowed out and Islamabad United joined the fray. Hyderabad dropped out of the race, with Hasnain secured by Islamabad for Rs7.75m.

Additionally, Nepalese batter Dipendra Singh Airee was bought for Rs6m.

The squad also includes Shadab Khan, Salman Irshad, Andries Gous, Devon Conway, Mehran Mumtaz, Sharar Joseph and Max Bryant.

Karachi Kings Islamabad United and Karachi Kings went neck and



neck bidding for Pakistan team captain Salman Ali Agha. However, with the final bid of Rs58.5m, Karachi Kings secured the player.

Australian cricketer Adam Zampa is also set to join the team after the Karachi Kings secured him with a bid of Rs45m.

Bidding on wicket keepers began with Azam Khan — at the base price of Rs31m. With the final bids of Rs31.5m by Sialkot Stallionz and Rs32.5m by Karachi Kings, the latter managed to secure Khan.

Karachi Kings also secured Shahid Aziz with a winning bid of Rs9.25m.

It also secured Mir Hamza with a bid of Rs24m along with Aqib Ilyas at a bid of Rs6m.

Additionally, the team also bagged Australian batsman David Warner for Rs79m after a round of back-and-forth bidding with Peshawar Zalmi.

Mohammad Hamza Sohai also joined Karachi Kings.

Later, the West Indies' Johnson Charles was finally sold, with an Rs20m bid from the Karachi Kings.

Khuzaima bin Tanveer was sold to the team after it bid Rs9m for the player against Rawalpindi and Peshawar Zalmi.

Muhammad Waseem was sold for his base price of Rs11m, while pacer Ihsanullah was picked up for Rs10.5m after back-and-forth bidding with Sialkot.

Rizwanullah was purchased by the franchise for his base price of Rs6m.

Lahore Qalandars Lahore Qalandars regained fast-bowler Haris Rauf at Rs76m against Rawalpindi's Rs74.5m bid.

The team also managed to retain Fakhar Zaman with a winning bid of Rs79.5m against Peshawar Zalmi. It

bagged Usama Mir at Rs35, followed closely by Ubaid Shah at Rs27m.

Mohammad Farooq was sold to the team at a winning bid of Rs6m.

Sri Lankan all-rounder Dasun Shanaka was snapped up after the break for Rs7.5m. Afterwards, they bought Bangladeshi opening batter Parvez Hossain Emon for Rs6m.

The Lahore Qalandars then bagged Asif Ali at his base price of Rs6m, later snapping up all-rounder Hussain Talat for Rs7.75m.

Right-handed batter Tayyab Tahir was bought for Rs6m, while the West Indies' Gudakesh Moties was snapped up for Rs11m.

Sialkot Stallionz Sialkot Stallionz bagged Sahibzada Farhan against Karachi Kings, with a bid of Rs57m. The team also secured Australia's Ashton Turner at Rs42m.

Australian cricketer Peter Siddle was also sold to Sialkot Stallionz with the winning bid of Rs25m, while spinner Tabrez Shamsi was sold to the team at a bid of 22m.

Delano Potgieter was sold to the team at Rs6m.

Australian wicketkeeper-batter Josh Philippe was sold to Sialkot Stallionz after the break for Rs23m. Batter Shan Masood, meanwhile, was

snapped up for a bid of Rs6.5m.

Spinner Momin Qamar was secured by Sialkot for Rs10.75m after a flurry of bidding with Hyderabad. They then raised the paddle at the very last moment to buy Muhammad Awaiz Zafar for his base price of Rs6m.

The squad also includes Steve Smith, Muhammad Daniyal, Lachlan Shaw and Saad Masood.

Quetta Gladiators Quetta Gladiators secured Khawaja Mohammad Nafay with a winning bid of Rs65m. The team also bought Faisal Akram with the final bid of Rs12.5m.

Wasim Akram Jr and Khan Zeb are also set to join the team. The team also secured Bismillah Khan, Saqib Khan, Brett Hampton, and Samuel Harper at the winning bid of Rs6m for each.

Bevon Jacobs also joined the team.

Later, batter Saud Shakeel was snapped up by the Quetta Gladiators for Rs6.5m after a bidding war with Sialkot Stallionz.

English all-rounder Tom Curran was bought by Quetta for Rs42m.

Australia's Ben McDermott was secured at the last minute for Rs11m.

T20 World Cup: South Africa beat Afghanistan in double Super over thriller



PEAK POINT DUBAI: South Africa prevailed in a double Super Over thriller as Afghanistan came up agonisingly short of a famous victory after their T20 World Cup clash ended in a tie on Wednesday.

Afghanistan were 187 all out after South Africa scored 187-6 in Ahmedabad.

The teams were tied again after a Maharaj into the crowd three times Over saw them both blow.

Group D to be placed second behind toppers New Zealand.

A few minutes earlier, after Gurbaz scored a brilliant 42-ball 84 in the chase, Afghanistan had needed 13 off the last over of the match to win with one wicket in hand.

A wide off the fifth ball meant Afghanistan still needed six to win but now a four would send it, incredibly, to a third Super Over.

With nerves jangling and pulses racing, the left-arm spinner held his nerve to bowl a wide yorker that saw Gurbaz smack into the grate-

ful hands of Davis Kock and Ryan Miller at point as he looked to hit a boundary. It was South Africa's second win in South Africa to bat as many matches in first.

After Kagiso Rabada bowled two no balls and a wide and Noor Ahmad hit a six, Afghanistan needed two to win off three balls.

But Noor was run out going for the winning second run with the scores level.

In the match's first innings, Quinton de Kock and Ryan Miller hit blazing half-centuries after Afghanistan invited South Africa to bat as many matches in first.

Pakistan juniors shine at ITF Asia U14 Championships in Cambodia



Malakand Division Swimming association elections concluded: Nasir Hussain Elected President, Sabir Khan Secretary

PEAK POINT MINGORA: The elections of the Malakand Division Swimming Association were successfully concluded in Mingora, resulting in the unanimous selection of new office-bearers. Nasir Hussain was elected as President, Sabir Khan as Secretary General, and Umar Hayat as Finance Secretary. A significant meeting was held in this regard, where Secretary General of the Provincial Swimming Association, Javed Marwat, performed the duties of Election Commissioner. Asad Khan and Table Tennis Coach Yasir Aziz served as committee members during the electoral process. The meeting was attended by Regional Sports Officer Malakand Muhammad Tariq, President of Peshawar Division Swimming Association Arshad Orakzai, Secretary General Mubeen Khalif, and

prominent representatives from Swat, Dir, Bajaur, Chitral, and adjoining districts. The newly elected cabinet of the Malakand Division Swimming Association includes: Nasir Hussain as President, Ikram Hussain as

Committee. The elections were conducted under the directives of Provincial Swimming Association President Captain (R) Khalid Mahmood, as part of an ongoing process to establish divisional associations across



Senior Vice President, Bushra Bibi as Senior Vice President, Hussain Sardar as Vice President, Sabir Khan as Secretary General, Afroza Bibi as Information Secretary, Ghazala Naem as Joint Secretary, while Hanifa Azeem Khan and Waheed Gul were elected as members of the Executive

various regions of the province. Addressing the meeting, newly elected President Nasir Hussain and Secretary General Sabir Khan reaffirmed their commitment to promoting swimming in Malakand Division and pledged to work towards identifying and nurturing talented swimmers.

Sikander/Aamir lift Lets Padel Advance Tournament trophy





Finance Minister Highlights venture capital support and innovation priorities in meeting with gobi partners

PEAK POINT
ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, held a meeting today at the Finance Division with a delegation of Gobi Partners led by Mr. Thomas Tsao, Chairman, along with Mr. Naiel Ikram, Managing Partner, and Mr. Abrarz Abdullah, Investment Associate.

Welcoming the delegation, the Finance Minister appreciated Gobi Partners' interest in Pakistan's venture capital ecosystem and acknowledged the firm's pres-

ence across Asia. He underscored the Government's commitment to strengthening Pakistan's venture capital and innovation landscape as part of its broader strategy to promote private sector-led growth, deepen financial markets, and support technology-driven economic diversification.

He emphasized that access to risk capital is critical for the scaling startup entrepreneurial landscape, fostering innovation, and generating sustainable employment opportunities. The delegation briefed the



Minister on Gobi's regional footprint and its investments in Pakistan through Techxila Fund I, launched in 2020, which has supported startups across fintech, e-commerce, and digital infrastructure. It was noted that venture capital participation has helped

mobilize additional foreign investment into Pakistan and contributed to job creation, financial inclusion, and digital transformation. Gobi Partners also shared plan regarding Techxila Fund II, with a proposed target size of USD 50 million, aimed at investing in

high-potential sectors including fintech, logistics, health technology, and software services. The firm expressed its intention to anchor the fund with its own capital and mobilize participation from domestic and international institutional investors. During the discussion, the delegation highlighted the importance of further strengthening

the enabling framework for venture capital in Pakistan. In this regard, they suggested encouraging greater participation by domestic financial institutions in venture capital and private

equity, as well as considering tax pass-through status for venture capital and private equity fund investments to facilitate local investor participation.

The Finance Minister reaffirmed the Government's resolve to maintain macroeconomic stability, improve the business climate, and advance reforms in tax policy and investment facilitation. He emphasized that mobilizing domestic capital alongside foreign investment remains central to building a resilient and sustainable innovation-led growth model.

NAFSA's Adhoc appointments and PSDP delays draw strong reactions from Senate

NADEEM TANOLI

ISLAMABAD: The Senate Standing Committee on National Food Security & Research has expressed outrage over the delay in finalizing the budgetary proposals for the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) for the financial year 2026-27. Despite critical issues on the agenda, the Committee was forced to postpone key deliberations after receiving working papers late, leading to serious reservations from committee members. The lack of preparedness for the meeting, including the non-submission

of the PSDP budget proposals, was met with strong disapproval. Committee members voiced frustration over the Ministry's failure to finalize the budgetary allocations, which are crucial for the upcoming fiscal year. Chairman Senator Syed Masroor Ahsan did not mince words, directing that all working papers be submitted well in advance to avoid further delays. The Ministry was urged to complete the proposals before the next session, with the Chairman calling for immediate action to resolve the ongoing hold up. Further scrutiny was directed at the National Agri

Trade and Food Safety Authority (NAFSA), which has been plagued by ad hoc senior management appointments. The Committee raised serious concerns about the Authority's operational efficiency, stressing the need for regular appointments of key positions, including the Board of Governors and Director General. While temporary appointments were made to get NAFSA operational, Senators insisted that a more permanent staffing solution was necessary. Emphasis was placed on ensuring provincial representation in appointments, with the Chairman calling

for faster action to make the Authority fully functional. Despite the setbacks, the Committee did take positive action on several key projects. Among them was the "Thar Community Actions for the Management of Sustainable Ecosystem, Livestock and Livelihood (Thar CAMEL)" project, aimed at gene conservation of indigenous livestock and the establishment of diagnostic laboratories in Tharparkar. The Committee commended the project's significance, endorsing its inclusion in the PSDP. Additionally, a project to develop high value camel

milk powder was reviewed, with the Committee recommending the expansion of the initiative to other provinces like Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, which also have large camel populations. The Committee also approved the regularization of the PSDP project "Strengthening/Upgradation of Agriculture and Livestock Research System of Arid Zone Research Institute, Umerkot, Sindh." This project aims to enhance the research capabilities of national laboratories in line with both national and international standards. Furthermore, the Committee

emphasized the need to conserve indigenous livestock breeds, such as local goats and cattle, as part of the overall strategy for agricultural development in Pakistan's arid regions. In closing, Chairman Senator Syed Masroor Ahsan acknowledged the significant potential of these initiatives to boost agricultural productivity. The successful execution of these projects, he noted, could contribute immensely to the nation's foreign exchange earnings while also improving livelihoods in underserved areas.

Opinion & Editorial

Shahzad Sharjeel
Arif Mehmood Khan
Group Editor: 0333-5366814
Samra Athar Kakakhel
Resident Editor
Nadim Tanoli
Joint Editor: Mob-0301-777874
Email: editor.peakpoint@gmail.com
www.peakpoint.pk

Not a drop to search

LIFE keeps getting more complex and guilt-ridden by the day. As if the carbon footprint calculation was not enough to turn one into an off-grid hermit, now we have the water footprint to feel guilty about. I hereby declare you 'guilty', dear reader, of all the charges I am framing against all of us in this piece.

Ask me how much water I consume in a day, and I will start with the few glasses I drink, then quickly move on to the litres used for washing and bathing. Push a bit more, and I will confess to being an obsessive car washer. Some of us would mention the 'green patch' in the house that must be watered year-round. Push harder still, and we will grudgingly divide the 3,000 to 7,000 litres of water needed to produce each pair of denim by the period we own them to arrive at a daily average. Since I am terrible at mental math, I will do all these calculations on my smartphone to determine how much water each listed activity costs. In doing so, data centres globally will consume 0.26 millilitres, about five drops of water, for each search. Mind you, this data on water consumption pertains to regular web searches; AI searches consume more water.

It took a media outlet to take the Oregon city government to court to obtain data on the water used to cool the Google data centre. In 2021,

12.4 billion litres of water in the US alone. In 2023, it used 23bn litres worldwide. WHO guidelines recommend 50 to 100 litres of water per person to meet drinking, cooking, and hygiene needs under normal circumstances. However, in a post-disaster or humanitarian crisis, 15 litres per person is the minimum required to meet basic needs.

To fully grasp how much we are all contributing to water stress, particularly owing to our web wanderlust, let us consider that Google is not the only search engine in the world. Microsoft's internal projections estimate that, in 2030, the water required to cool its 100 data centres will be 28bn litres. To make things even more complex, the data centres use water both physically and virtually. While the usage in the physical sense, ie, water used to cool the data-processing centres at these facilities, is one measure, virtual usage pertains to the water used by their electricity providers to cool their production plants.

Imagine the water consumed in even a day of web searches. Before we jump to condemn the tech billionaires for destroying the world's ecology in their quest for private gain, let's consider the fact that we are as much part of the problem as we are beneficiaries of these technological developments. It is amusing to watch developing countries lay all the blame for global warm-

ing at the doorstep of the developed North. The argument goes something like this: 'It is the North that burned all the coal and oil in its pursuit of capitalist greed; we, the South, are not even industrialised yet.' To buy into this simplistic logic, one would have to discount all the benefits of advancements we have derived since the Industrial Revolution. While developing countries may not have released greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, they have benefited from everything that resulted from the North's 'greed', from jet engines to search engines to diagnosis and treatment of all manner of diseases.

The next time you are told to work smarter and put AI to use to complete one inane task or another, think hard if you can put your natural intelligence to use before resorting to AI.

On July 14 this year, Pakistan signed an MoU with SC Financial Technologies, a crypto-based financial platform affiliated with the Trump family's World Liberty, to integrate its bitcoin into a regulated digital payments structure, allowing it to operate alongside Pakistan's own digital currency mechanism. As Pakistan integrates cryptocurrency and bitcoin payments into its economy, it should be noted that a single bitcoin transaction can use as much as 16,000 litres of water, enough to fill a backyard swimming pool.

Courtesy Dawn

Before October 7

Yumna Zahid Ali

The war did not begin on October 7, 2023, no matter how loudly that date is repeated to erase the long history of occupation and conflict that came before it. October 7 is used as a licence to forget, a convenient starting line that allows seventy-five years of dispossession, occupation, siege and repeated military assaults to be reduced to historical ash. But the testimonies of the oppressed do not work that way. Wars do not begin when the powerful decide to start counting; they begin when people are uprooted from their land, dignity, safety and any right to futurity, and Gaza's story begins in 1948, not in 2023. In 1948, during what Palestinians call Al-Nakba, or 'The Catastrophe', the creation of the State of Israel came with the forced displacement of at least 750,000 Palestinians from their ancestral land. Entire villages were cleared, homes demolished or seized, and families sent into exile under the illusion that it was only for a short time. It was not. Those refugees were never allowed to return, and Gaza became one of the places where their descendants were compressed into a narrow strip of land where loss was perpetuated, not remembered. When Gaza is bombed today, it is not just a city under fire; it is a refugee camp built on an unresolved crime. In 1967, Israel occupied the Gaza Strip following the Six-Day War, placing its population under military rule and control. From that moment forward, Gaza's residents did not control their borders, their airspace, or their freedom of movement. Daily life was regulated by an occupying power that could decide who travelled, who entered, who passed through a checkpoint, who received medicine, and who would have their name crossed out. This was not a temporary emergency measure; it was the normalisation of domination, and it hardened a sense of injustice, not because Palestinians rejected peace, but because they were never offered freedom.

Courtesy Tribune

Any military escalation involving Iran could destabilise Gulf region, South Asia, Western Asia: President Zardari



PEAK POINT
ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari on Wednesday appreciated efforts for easing tensions and promoting regional peace, warning that any military escalation involving Iran could destabilise the Gulf region, South Asia and Western Asia.

He said this while addressing a ceremony hosted by the Iranian embassy in Islamabad on the 47th anniversary of the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

"Any instability involv-

ing Iran, or any attempt to resolve issues through military means, carries grave risks. Such actions could ... undermine global peace, and cause serious harm to the global economy. The stakes are far too high for confrontation," Zardari said.

He further stated that Pakistan opposed unilateral sanctions and coercive measures, including against Iran, and believed that "peaceful engagement best serves regional and global security".

"Pakistan welcomes efforts aimed at easing ten-

sions and encourages continued dialogue among relevant parties in a constructive spirit, with the objective of promoting peace and stability in the region," he added.

Earlier, the president requested the participants of the ceremony to observe one minute of silence in the memory of victims of the recent blast in Islamabad, and the tragedies in Iran.

"Let's pray that was never come to us," he said.

Referring to ongoing conflicts, terrorism, external interference and unresolved

regional flashpoints in the region, the president said Pakistan firmly believed that such challenges could not be addressed through force or unilateral actions. He also emphasised that Pakistan and Iran shared responsibilities as neighbouring countries and remained committed to cooperating on border management, counter-terrorism and "turning the shared frontier into a zone of cooperation, lawful trade and development".

The president stressed that Pakistan valued balanced

relations globally and was ready to play a constructive role in promoting restraint, dialogue and regional peace.

He extended his warm congratulations to the leadership and people of Iran.

"May our partnership continue to grow, and may our region move towards security, stability and shared prosperity," he said.

The president added Pakistan and Iran were not just neighbours, but also "civilisational partners".

"Our shared border reflects centuries of interac-

tion, coexistence and mutual respect," he stated. "Our relationship is rooted in faith, history and enduring cultural bonds that continue to shape our region."

He noted that the Persian language and its great literary tradition had profoundly influenced Pakistan's intellectual life, adding that for hundreds of years, it was the official language of some of the regions that were now a part of Pakistan. "Its influence remains deeply embedded in our national consciousness.

Pakistan, Cambodia agree to deepen trade, industrial and supply chain cooperation

PEAK POINT
ISLAMABAD: A delegation-level meeting co-chaired by Federal Minister for Commerce of Pakistan Jam Kamal Khan and Cambodia's Minister of Commerce Cham Nimul was held today in Islamabad to further strengthen bilateral trade, investment, and industrial cooperation between Pakistan and Cambodia.

The meeting was attended by Rana Ihsan Afzal Khan, Coordinator to the Prime Minister on Commerce; Jawad Paul, Secretary Commerce; and senior officials from relevant ministries, regulatory bodies, and industry on both sides. Welcoming the Cambodian delegation, Federal Minister Jam Kamal Khan termed the visit significant for deepening Pakistan-Cambodia economic relations, both bilaterally and within the broader ASEAN framework. He emphasized Pakistan's commitment to translating diplomatic engagement into concrete commercial and industrial outcomes. The Commerce Minister highlighted Pakistan's ability to sup-

ply a wide range of raw materials and intermediate goods, that Cambodia currently imports from other sources. In this context, he underlined Pakistan's potential as a reliable alternative supplier, particularly of high-quality fabrics already used by leading global brands, which could help diversify supply chains and enhance resilience. Discussions focused extensively on the textile and garment sector, where both countries possess strong export bases. The Minister noted that Pakistan is the third-largest global supplier of home textiles, presenting clear opportunities for Cambodia to expand sourcing from Pakistan. Both sides agreed that closer integration across the textile value chain—covering yarn, fabrics, processing, stitching, and value addition—could enhance competitiveness in regional and global markets. Collaboration in technical textiles, a global market estimated at USD 300 billion, was also identified as a priority area. The pharmaceutical sector was highlighted as another key area of cooperation.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan and H.E Cham Nimul co-chair the 2nd Pakistan-Cambodia JTC and sign the Joint Statement to advance bilateral trade and investment cooperation.

Federal Minister Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh welcomes Saudi Kyan delegation

PEAK POINT
ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Board of Investment (BOI), Mr. Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh, welcomed a delegation from Kyan, Saudi Arabia, during their visit to Pakistan. The delegation participated in the "Indus AI Week" organized by the Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunication (MoITT). The Federal Minister highlighted the longstanding brotherly relations between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia and emphasized the importance of further strengthening economic and investment cooperation between the two countries. The Kyan delegation expressed keen interest in exploring investment opportunities in Pakistan, particularly in the sectors of energy, mining, information technology, agriculture, and livestock. The delegation shared proposals for various potential projects with an estimated minimum investment of USD 200 million for each project and also conveyed their interest in bringing additional Saudi investors to Pakistan. Mr. Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh, who comes from a business,

NA speaker accepts 2024 resignation of BNP-M chief Akhtar Mengal

PEAK POINT
ISLAMABAD: National Assembly Speaker Ayaz Sadiq on Wednesday accepted the resignation of veteran politician Sardar Akhtar Mengal, chief of his faction of the Balochistan National Party (BNP-M). Mengal, who was elected as an MNA from Khuzdar (NA-256) in the 2024 general elections, had submitted his resignation in September that year, citing the "prevailing situation in Balochistan". "PML-N has at last accepted my resignation after dragging its feet long enough to expose its own fear," Mengal said in a social media post, referring to the speaker's party. "Was it the applause that



unsettled you or the fact that I could draw crowds in Punjab's core?" he asked, apparently referring to his participation in a charged discussion about Balochistan at the Asma Jahangir Conference held recently in Lahore. At the event, Mengal had criticised recent political and electoral developments, alleging that mainstream Baloch political leadership had been sidelined.

Qamar Bajwa shifted to hospital after fall at residence

PEAK POINT
RAWALPINDI: Former Pakistan Army chief General (r) Qamar Javed Bajwa has sustained injuries after a fall at his residence, it was learnt on Wednesday. The former top general has been shifted to a hospital, where his treatment is ongoing, according to initial reports. No further medical details were immediately available about the nature of his injuries or his condition. Qamar Javed Bajwa is a retired four-star general who served as the 16th Chief of Army Staff of the Pakistan Army from November 2016 to November 2022. He was replaced by General Syed Asim Munir, who is current-



ly serving as Chief of Army Staff and Chief of Defence Forces (CDF). Qamar Javed Bajwa was commissioned into the Pakistan Army in 1980 in the Baloch Regiment and rose through the ranks over a career spanning more than four decades. Before assuming command of the army, he held several key positions, including Corps Commander of X Corps in Rawalpindi.

PILDAT report urges cross-sector reforms to strengthen women's effective participation in public service

PEAK POINT
LAHORE: To commemorate National Women's Day in Pakistan, observed on February 12, the Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development and Transparency (PILDAT) finds that women in Pakistan continue to face deep-rooted barriers to leadership across public service fields, despite constitutional guarantees, affirmative action measures, and workplace protection laws. Titled Women in Public Service in Pakistan: Barriers and Recommendations, the

report was prepared with the support of Interloop Limited, and examines the structural and institutional factors shaping women's leadership outcomes. These findings were discussed at a report launch and dialogue in Lahore, which brought together women leaders from politics, civil society, law, media, and city society. Mr. Ahmed Bilal Mehboob, President, PILDAT and Provincial Ombudsman for protection against harassment, actual designation of Nabila hakim ali khan also joined the ses-

sion. Participants reflected on how informal power structures, weak accountability mechanisms, and inconsistent implementation of existing laws continue to constrain women's leadership, despite improvements in formal representation. The report highlights stark gaps between women's numerical presence and their actual influence within institutions. Women currently comprise approximately 22% of members of the National Assembly, yet chair fewer than 10% of Standing

Committees. Out of 31 federal ministers, only one is a woman. In the federal civil service, women account for just 5.1% of the workforce, with more than 75% of these positions below BS-17. Women make up only 3.2% of the police workforce nationwide, and although they represent about 18% of judges and judicial officers overall, just 5.5% serve as judges in superior courts. Presenting the report's findings PILDAT, noted that while 85% of respondents observed an

increase in women's representation in their respective fields over the past decade, only 35% believed that women's voices are adequately represented in decision-making spaces in their fields. Just 19% felt that women occupy positions of genuine authority, while the majority described women's participation as a mix of real influence and tokenism. Nearly four in five respondents reported that they had either personally experienced or had witnessed barriers limiting women's advance-

ment, underscoring the systemic nature of these challenges even among women who have reached senior professional positions. Respondents identified multiple, overlapping barriers that constrain women's leadership trajectories. Socio-cultural norms and gender roles were reported as a strong barrier by 40% of respondents, while work-life balance pressures were cited by 43% of respondents as a strong barrier. Respondents also highlighted institutional gate-keeping.