



President greets Kuwaiti leadership, people on National Day, Hala February festivities



IMF review mission arrives in Pakistan for key economic assessment



FWO DG meets railways minister to review development, digitalization projects

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PM Shehbaz assures full federal support for Sindh projects in meeting with Murad Ali Shah

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday assured complete federal cooperation for the timely completion of development projects in Sindh during a meeting here with Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah. The chief minister briefed the prime minister in detail on the progress of ongoing development initiatives in the province, a Prime Minister's Office news release said. The prime minister said the federal government would extend all possible support to ensure early completion of projects in Sindh. He directed the relevant ministries to maintain close coordination with the provincial government to accelerate public welfare initiatives. PM Shehbaz Sharif said

the Pakistan Peoples Party is an important ally of the federal government and emphasized that national development could be further accelerated through cooperation among coalition partners. He noted that harmony and consultation among allied parties were essential for national stability and continuity of policies. Appreciating Sindh's leadership as a key partner in the coalition government, the prime minister said strong coordination between the federation and provinces would strengthen the democratic system and help address public issues effectively. Matters relating to Sindh's political situation and other issues of mutual interest also came under discussion. Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, Federal Ministers Azam Nazeer Tarar and Ahsan Iqbal.



ISLAMABAD: Chief Minister Sindh Syed Murad Ali Shah called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

India's Modi visits Israel as US-Iran tensions mount

PEAK POINT



JERUSALEM: India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi arrives in Israel on Wednesday for a two-day visit that both countries have cast as a chance to deepen relations, as regional concerns mount over the risk of military conflict between the United States and Iran. Modi, a Hindu nationalist, became the first prime minister in India's history to visit Israel in 2017, during which he and right-wing Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu took a barefoot stroll on a beach in the northern port city of Haifa. Both still in power nearly nine years later, the two leaders, who describe one another as friends, are expected to hold talks on artificial intelligence as well as defence at a time when Israel is seeking to increase its military exports. An Israeli government official said the visit would "pave the way for new partnerships and collaborations across many fields." Bilateral ties were on the cusp of a significant upgrade, an Israeli foreign ministry official said. Modi is expected to deliver remarks to Israel's Knesset, or parliament, and lay a wreath at Yad Vashem, Israel's official Holocaust memorial.

Pakistan retaliates against unprovoked firing from Afghan regime in Torkham, Tirah border areas

PEAK POINT

KHYBER: Pakistan responded effectively to unprovoked firing by Afghan Taliban on Pak-Afghan border in Torkham and Tirah.

According to PM foreign media spokesman Musharraf Zaidi, Pakistan security forces responded quickly and effectively to the aggression.

In a statement on X, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's spokesman for foreign media, Musharraf Zaidi, said any further provocation will be responded promptly and strongly.

According to security sources, clashes took place at three different points in the border area and the firing continued for about an hour.

All Pakistan Army soldiers remained safe. The post reads, "The Afghan Taliban regime



while during the retaliatory action, a checkpoint of the Afghan forces was targeted and completely destroyed.

The Prime Minister's spokesman said any further provocation will be responded in a befitting manner.

God willing, Pakistan will continue to protect its citizens and defend its territorial integrity, he added.

to protect its citizens and guard its territorial integrity."

Tensions escalated sharply in October 2025, when the two neighbours were drawn into fierce border clashes following unprovoked attacks on Pakistan frontier posts by the Afghan Taliban and allied fighters.

According to Pakistani officials, more than 200 Taliban and affiliated militants were killed in the fighting, while 23 Pakistani soldiers lost their lives.

Pakistan's recent strikes along the Afghan border came after a wave of militant attacks in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan that have left many civilians and members of the security forces dead.

Any further provocation will be responded to immediately and severely. InshaAllah, Pakistan will continue

Petition filed in SC seeking transfer of Imran Khan to Shifa Hospital

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: A petition has been filed in the Supreme Court of Pakistan seeking the transfer of jailed Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf founder Imran Khan to Shifa International Hospital for medical treatment. The petition was submitted by his legal counsel, including Latif Khosa, Shehbaz Khosa and Hamza Sattar. According to the plea, the PTI founder should be immediately shifted to Shifa Hospital for a medical examination, particularly for an eye check-up.

6 killed in firing, mortar attack on Kech house

PEAK POINT

GWADAR: Six members of a single family were killed and three others were injured when unidentified armed men opened fire and attacked with a mortar at a house in the Minaz locality of Kech district's Buleda tehsil, police officials said. According to police sources, the assailants opened indiscriminate gunfire alongside firing a mortar strike, killing six, including at least three children. The injured were immediately shifted to a hospital, with some reported to be in critical condition. Following the incident, security forces cordoned off the area.

Naqvi meets Italian counterpart, agreement reached on 10,500 work visas

PEAK POINT

ROME: Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi met with his Italian counterpart Matteo Piantedosi during his official visit to Rome, where both sides discussed enhancing bilateral cooperation in internal security, curbing illegal immigration, and promoting legal migration channels.

During the meeting, the two countries agreed to issue 10,500 work visas for skilled Pakistani workers to promote legal migration. The Italian interior minister reaffirmed Italy's commitment to expanding cooperation with Pakistan in areas of mutual interest and strengthening collaboration on regulated migration pathways.

At Naqvi's request, the Italian side also expressed

willingness to grant visa counterterrorism. Both exemption to holders of ministers appreciated the



Pakistani diplomatic passports. Piantedosi noted that discussions on the matter had also taken place in an earlier meeting. The talks further focused on boosting cooperation in counter-narcotics efforts, combating human trafficking, and

ongoing measures to prevent illegal immigration and human smuggling. Naqvi briefed his counterpart on the steps taken by the Government of Pakistan to curb illegal migration, highlighting enhanced surveillance at airports and sea borders,

which he said had led to a significant reduction in unlawful departures.

The Italian minister praised the policies of Pakistan's Interior Ministry in tackling illegal immigration and commended Pakistani institutions for their successes against human trafficking and narcotics.

Officials from Punjab Police also gave a briefing on the effectiveness of Police Khidmat Markaz Global, which was appreciated by Italian authorities. Pakistan's Ambassador to Italy Ali Javed, Director General of Federal Investigation Agency Dr Usman Anwar, Managing Director of Punjab Safe Cities Authority Ahsan Younas, and senior police officers Abid Khan and Sohail Chaudhry were also present at the meeting.

Security forces eliminate 34 militants in KP, Balochistan operations: ISPR

PEAK POINT



RAWALPINDI: Security forces have killed 34 militants during a series of high-tempo, intelligence-based operations carried out over the past several days as part of an ongoing counterterrorism campaign, said ISPR.

The operations were conducted in multiple districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 26 militants were killed in four separate engagements. Security forces intercepted a group attempting to infiltrate across the Pakistan-Afghanistan border in the general area of Hassan Khel, North Waziristan district. During the exchange of fire, one militant — identified as an Afghan national — was killed. In Lakki Marwat district, three militants were killed during an intelligence-based operation after an intense gun battle.



SPORTS



Can Pakistan still qualify for T20 World Cup semi-final?



PEAK POINT leads with 4 points after winning both matches. Additionally, New Zealand must lose both of their remaining matches against England and Sri Lanka.

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's journey to the ICC T20 World Cup semi-finals has become complicated following a narrow 2-wicket defeat against the England cricket team on Tuesday.

England's victory secured their semi-final spot, while Pakistan now depends on the outcomes of other group matches to progress. Currently, in Group 2, England

Pakistan and New Zealand each have 1 point, while Sri Lanka has yet to register a win. Pakistan has one remaining match, while New Zealand and Sri Lanka have two matches each.

For Pakistan to reach the semi-finals, the Green Shirts must defeat Sri Lanka in their final match on February 28.

The ideal scenario requires: England defeating New Zealand in their final match. Sri Lanka defeating New Zealand in their remaining fixture. If these results occur, Pakistan would advance with 3 points, keeping their semi-final hopes alive.

PHF appoints Samiullah as chief selector to spearhead hockey revival

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Hockey Federation (PHF) has appointed former Olympian and legendary winger Samiullah, famously known as the "Flying Horse," as chief selector of the Pakistan men's hockey team as part of its ongoing efforts to revive the national game.



According to a press release, the appointment was recommended by the PHF Professional Development Committee comprising Olympians Hasan Sardar and Islahuddin Siddiqui.

The federation said the decision forms part of a broader strategy aimed at strengthening Pakistan hockey through grassroots development, improved high-performance systems and enhanced international competitiveness.

Under its comprehensive hockey roadmap, the PHF plans to establish a restructured team management system, including a functional selection committee, head coach and supporting staff. The roadmap also envisages preparation of a structured calendar for domestic and international competitions, along with technical education programmes for coaches, umpires and officials. The federation will also launch nationwide talent hunt programmes to identify and nurture emerging players while promoting hockey at school and college levels by reviving inter-school and inter-collegiate competitions. Additionally, plans are underway to establish a high-performance centre to facilitate modern training and long-term player development.

England's Brook uncertain about continuing at number three



PEAK POINT team to book their from his usual number five slot.

PALLEKELE: Harry Brook smashed a match-winning hundred in Tuesday's Super Eight match against Pakistan after being moved up the order to number three but the England captain is unsure if he will stay in the new slot for the rest of the Twenty20 World Cup.

Brook struck a two-run-a-ball hundred as England head coach Brendon McCullum's chase to be the first

That's something for me and Baz to chat about," he said.

"The longer I bat, the better it is for me. It's a lot easier facing their best bowlers through the middle period when you're already set."

England's white-ball captain has endured a torrid time since news emerged of his altercation with a nightclub bouncer in New Zealand late last year, making Tuesday's knock especially sweet.

"It's probably been the hardest winter of my life, to be honest," the 27-year-old said. "There's been a lot of stuff behind the scenes as well as not behind the scenes, but yes, it's just nice to see some rewards from my hard work away from the ground."

Pakistan Hockey team arrives in Egypt for World Cup Qualifiers



Farhan climbs to No 3 in ICC T20I Rankings as Saim slips to second in all-rounders

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan opener Sahibzada Farhan has achieved a career-high milestone by jumping two spots to claim the No. 3 position in the batting rankings as the leading performers at the ongoing ICC Men's T20 World Cup made their move on the updated lists.

As the tournament's leading run-scorer so far, Farhan's explosive form has propelled him ahead of several established stars, sitting just behind India's Abhishek Sharma (No. 1) and England's Phil Salt (No. 2).

In the all-rounder category, Pakistan's Saim Ayub has slipped to second place after a tight battle with Zimbabwe's Sikandar Raza, who regained the top spot following his crucial contributions—including knocks of 45 against Sri Lanka and 27 versus West Indies—that

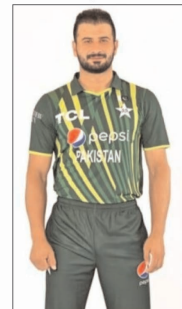
helped Zimbabwe secure qualification for the Super Eights. Despite the setback, Ayub remains a dominant force in the format.

Other Pakistan-related notes include emerging talents like spinner Usman

Azam (down to 36th in batting) and Saim Ayub (down three to 34th in batting) have seen minor declines amid the tournament's intensity.

Elsewhere in the rankings, India's Abhishek Sharma holds firm at the top of the batting charts with 891 rating points, despite a quieter World Cup start, leading Phil Salt by 62 points. Ishan Kishan climbed three places to fifth in batting, while Dewald Brevis (South Africa) surged 10 spots to ninth for a career-best entry into the top 10.

On the bowling front, India's Varun Chakravarthy retains No. 1, with big gains from South Africa's Corbin Bosch (up 21 to third) and West Indies' Matthew Forde (up 23 to seventh). Jasprit Bumrah also returned to the top 10, rising seven places to eighth.



Tariq making a massive leap (up 59 places to 55th in bowling), while some established names such as Babar

Skipper Imran stars as Bahawalpur win National T20 Cup Qualifier final





Poverty can be controlled by focusing on inclusive growth, job creation, price stability: Dr Suleri

PEAK POINT
ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's most updated Household Integrated Economic Survey (HIES), gathered after six years, has shown strikingly upward trend in poverty rise in the country that can be controlled by prioritizing inclusive growth, job creation, price stability, and equitable resource distribution rather than focusing solely on GDP growth.

After nearly six years without updated data, Dr Suleri said, Pakistan's latest HIES reveals a troubling rise in poverty. The national poverty rate now stands at 28.9 per cent (2024-25), that means nearly one in three Pakistanis lives below the poverty line with Rs 8,484 per person per month.

He highlighted that poverty is significantly higher in rural areas (36.2 per cent) than in urban centres (17.4 per cent), with Balochistan facing the highest levels. Inequality remains substantial, with Sindh showing the greatest income disparity. Even Punjab, previously better positioned, has seen poverty rise

sharply, he added.

"In past six years, the income has doubled in rupees but food and housing now consume over 60 per cent of household budgets, leaving minimal spending of 6 per cent for education and health deepening long-term inequality. This fact is a guiding light for future economic policies to identify pertinent sectors of focus," Dr Abid Suleri said.

The SDPI Executive Director highlighted that multiple shocks have reversed earlier gains as there has been improvement in poverty reduction till 2018 that had eroded due to COVID-19 pandemic, which hit informal workers hard churning up their savings followed by the

2022 and 2025 floods, which destroyed livelihoods, land, infrastructure, livestock and third, the IMF-backed economic adjustments, currency depreciation, subsidy reductions, and rising energy prices.

These external factors, he said, scaled up inflation that has outpaced incomes, eroding purchasing power, especially for wage earners and small farmers. Moreover, structural weaknesses, limited job creation, weak exports, energy inefficiencies, and uneven provincial spending, have amplified these pressures, he said, adding that although social protection programmes like BISP provided relief, they were insufficient to offset cumulative economic

shocks.

To address the external factors driving poverty rise, he said, the country needs to increase its resilience against climate shocks by adopting climate smart agriculture, parametric insurance and smart infrastructure that can sustain these recurring shocks.

Dr Suleri also underscored that all these interventions fall under the provincial domain, therefore, the provinces shall establish their provincial finance commissions on the pattern of the National Finance Commission (NFC) to transfer resources from the provincial government to the local governments for developing district-level poverty reduction plan and inclusive

development.

He commented that the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) National Socio-economic Registry is a rich data repository that outlines clear outlook for health, education, household leadership, asset management and other indicators. "It guides to develop targeted interventions to alleviate poverty, as hand-out cash along cannot be the solution to end income inequalities," he added.

Whimsical spending, he said, needs to be curbed to end the elite capture of resources as taxpayers money shall be spent on the masses paying taxes indirectly to the national exchequer.

Parliament moves to regulate crypto: Virtual assets bill approved by senate committee

NADEEM TANOLI
ISLAMABAD: In a significant and potentially transformative move for Pakistan's financial landscape, the Senate Standing Committee on Cabinet Secretariat has approved the Virtual Assets Bill, 2025, setting the stage for formal regulation of the country's rapidly expanding digital and virtual asset sector. The approval signals the government's intent to bring cryptocurrencies and other virtual assets under a struc-

tured legal and regulatory framework. Once enacted, the bill will establish a dedicated regulatory authority empowered to license, supervise and monitor virtual asset service providers across Pakistan. The proposed regime aims to enforce investor protection, enhance transparency and ensure market integrity in a sector that has so far operated in a largely grey regulatory space. The meeting, chaired by Senator Rana Mahmood Ul Hassan, was attended by senior sena-

tors including Farooq Hamid Naek, Saleem Mandiwalla, Saadia Abbasi, Amir Waliuddin Chishti, Mohammad Abdul Qadir, Samina Mumtaz Zehri, Jan Muhammad, Syed Waqar Mehdi, Dr. Afnan Ullah Khan and Sherry Rehman. Finance Minister Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb was also present as the committee conducted a detailed clause-by-clause examination of the bill. Originally introduced in the Senate on August 15, 2025 by Minister for

Parliamentary Affairs Dr. Tariq Fazal Chaudhary on behalf of the Finance Minister, the bill has been under review for several months. Its approval by the committee marks a decisive step toward institutionalizing oversight of digital financial instruments, which have grown in popularity among Pakistani investors despite regulatory uncertainty. According to officials, the proposed authority will oversee licensing requirements, compliance mechanisms and

operational standards for companies dealing in virtual assets. The move is being viewed as part of broader efforts to align Pakistan's financial system with global regulatory trends while attempting to curb potential misuse of digital assets. Earlier during the same session, the committee also took up a Calling Attention Notice moved by Senator Samina Mumtaz Zehri regarding findings in a United Nations fact-finding mission report

from August 2024. The report highlighted large-scale destruction and displacement caused by floods in Sindh and Balochistan. After a briefing, the notice was disposed of. With the committee's approval now secured, the Virtual Assets Bill, 2025 advances to the next legislative stage, potentially reshaping how digital finance operates in Pakistan and placing the country formerly on the regulatory map in the global virtual asset ecosystem.

Opinion & Editorial

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'Greater Israel'

THE idea that the present state of Israel wants to morph into 'Greater Israel' — a quasi-mythical entity lost in the mists of time — is no longer the purview of conspiracy theorists. The country's prime minister has spoken of his commitment to achieving this goal, while most recently, the American ambassador to Israel also reaffirmed his belief that Tel Aviv has a right to establish a state based on biblical geography. Talking to American conservative journalist Tucker Carlson last week, Mike Huckabee said "it would be fine" if Israel took all the land — corresponding to the supposed biblical borders — from the Nile to the Euphrates. This would mean devouring all of occupied Palestine while also occupying Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Saudi Arabia. In the same interview, he said that the occupied West Bank's Area C "is Israel", contradicting the global consensus that it is Palestinian territory. But such outbursts are not unexpected from the ambassador, who is an ordained Evangelical minister and a rabid Christian Zionist. However, it is worrying that an official representative of the US is making such fanatical statements. Mr Huckabee later said it was a "hyperbolic statement", but the damage has been done, with several Arab and Muslim states expressing outrage at the idea of giving up more of their land to the Zionists.

Beyond Swift Retort to the Relentless Rise of Pakistan's Air Power

By: Izmi Herlani
Nations are not secured by rhetoric; they are secured by resolve. From the earliest days of Pakistan's statehood, the architects of its defence understood a stark truth: survival in a hostile neighbourhood demands mastery of the skies. It was not enough to possess aircraft; Pakistan required an air arm animated by conviction, sharpened by discipline and immune to coercion. The vision articulated by Muhammad Ali Jinnah was not poetic flourish — it was strategic foresight. An Air Force "Second to None" was not a slogan; it was an imperative. That imperative has shaped the institutional DNA of Pakistan Air Force. Over decades, it cultivated a culture where preparation is habitual and excellence is compulsory. Its officers, airmen and civilian staff were schooled to think beyond the immediate horizon, to anticipate rather than react, and to convert adversity into advantage. In this crucible of discipline, the modern PAF was forged.

The world witnessed the manifestation of that ethos on 27 February, 2019 during Operation Swift Retort. Much has been written about that day, but its true significance lies beyond the headlines. It was not merely a retaliatory maneuver in a tense crisis; it was a calculated demonstration of credibility. In a matter of hours, PAF dismantled the illusion that escalation could be imposed upon Pakistan without consequence. Precision strikes, calibrated messaging and deliberate restraint combined into a seamless orchestration of power. The skies did not erupt in chaos; they were commanded with clarity. Operation Swift Retort was, in essence, a doctrinal declaration. It signaled that Pakistan's aerial shield was neither reactive nor brittle. It was agile, networked and confident. Years of quiet moderniza-



tion, relentless training and operational introspection converged into a display of synchronized force. The message resonated far beyond the region: deterrence, when backed by capability and will, is unmistakable.

Yet Air Power, like history, does not stand still. The character of warfare has transformed with breathtaking speed. Today's battlespace is not confined to altitude and speed; it extends into the electromagnetic spectrum, cyber corridors and orbital pathways. Recognizing this, PAF leadership has embarked this dynamic organization on a profound transformation; one that transcends hardware acquisitions and embraces conceptual evolution. Advanced combat platforms now operate as nodes within an interconnected ecosystem. Unmanned systems complement manned aircraft; electronic warfare units contest invisible frontiers; cyber capabilities shield and probe simultaneously. Artificial intelligence augments decision cycles, compressing the time between detection and action. In this architecture, dominance is not achieved by numbers alone but by integration — by the seamless fusion of sensors, shooters and strategists into a unified Kill Chain.

This transformation was not theoretical. In May 2025, when confronted with renewed provocation, the PAF responded under unified command with a clarity that underscored its maturation. Multi Domain Operations unfolded with surgical precision. Adversarial assets were neutralized not in isolation but as part of a coordi-

nated matrix of kinetic and non-kinetic effects. The response was calibrated yet decisive, reaffirming that deterrence remains credible only when it is demonstrably enforceable. What distinguishes the contemporary PAF is not merely its inventory but its intellectual capital. Technology, however advanced, is inert without mastery. The lifeblood of air power remains training: rigorous, unforgiving and continuous. From basic flight instruction to high-end multinational exercises, PAF air warriors are conditioned to operate in complex, contested environments. They are trained to absorb ambiguity, to make split-second decisions under immense pressure and to execute with clinical accuracy. Education and innovation are no longer peripheral pursuits; they are strategic enablers. PAF Leadership Development programs cultivate commanders who are as comfortable with algorithms as they are with aerodynamics. Exposure to international best practices broadens horizons, while indigenous research grounds ambition in national capability. This synthesis of global insight and local ingenuity has ensured that PAF remains adaptive in an era defined by disruption.

Parallel to operational refinement runs a determined march toward self-reliance. For too long, developing nations have equated security with dependence. Pakistan has chosen a different path. Through a burgeoning aerospace ecosystem and expanding science & technology parks, the foundations of sustainable air power are being laid at home. Indigenous maintenance, avionics upgrades and system integrations are reducing vulnerabilities while strengthening strategic autonomy. Self-reliance is not isolation; it is resilience. By embedding innovation within national industry, PAF under the astute command of Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Bابر

is cultivating a virtuous cycle — military requirements stimulate technological growth, which in turn enhances national capacity. The dividends extend beyond defence, invigorating sectors that underpin economic vitality and scientific advancement.

Seven years after Swift Retort, the security of Pakistan's skies rests not on chance but on determination of our Men & Women in Blue. PAF stands today as a fully integrated, Multi-Domain Force capable of shaping outcomes across the spectrum of conflict. Its doctrine is refined in peace, validated in crisis and informed by the unyielding pursuit of excellence. Deterrence, however, is a dialogue. It communicates through capability and credibility. PAF's recent operations have reiterated that Pakistan's sovereignty is neither negotiable nor vulnerable. PAF leadership has ensured that by development of its home grown Kill Chain any miscalculation by the adversary will encounter swift correction. The calculus for any adversary is therefore stark: escalation invites consequences that are immediate and proportionate. Air power is as much about spirit as it is about steel. Aircraft may patrol the skies, but it is conviction of our Shaheens that anchors them. Pakistan Air Force embodies a tradition where professionalism is sacred, preparation is perpetual and patriotism is instinctive. It has evolved from a force that has answered challenges to one that shapes the strategic environment. From Operation Swift Retort to Marka e Haq and beyond, PAF's journey has been neither accidental nor easy. It has been earned through sacrifice, foresight and steadfast resolve. As regional dynamics grow increasingly complex, one reality endures: the guardians of Pakistan's skies remain vigilant, capable and unbowed. For a nation that values its sovereignty, that assurance is priceless.

Pakistan, Turkmenistan enjoy cordial, brotherly relations anchored in mutual respect, shared values: Gilani



PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: The Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani reaffirmed that Pakistan and Turkmenistan enjoy cordial and brotherly relations anchored in mutual respect, shared values, common history, culture, and a longstanding tradition of cooperation.

During a meeting with Atadjan Movlamov, Ambassador of Turkmenistan to Pakistan, he fondly recalled his official visit to Turkmenistan in May last year, dur-

ing which he held productive meetings with the leadership of Turkmenistan, including President Serdar Berdimuhamedow. He noted that these engagements further strengthened mutual understanding and opened new avenues for bilateral collaboration.

He reiterated Pakistan's consistent support for Turkmenistan's policy of permanent neutrality and recalled Pakistan's role as co-sponsor of the United Nations General Assembly Resolution recognizing Turkmenistan's neutrality. Referring to recent high-level engagements, the Chairman Senate highlighted the visits of Pakistan's President, Prime Minister, and Deputy Prime Minister to Turkmenistan, including the Prime Minister's participation in the United Nations International Forum of Peace and Trust in December 2025, commemorating the 30th Anniversary of Turkmenistan's Neutrality. On the sidelines of the Forum, the Prime Minister held a substantive bilateral meeting with President Serdar Berdimuhamedow, where both sides emphasized enhancing economic cooperation and expanding bilateral engagement. An invitation was also extended to the President of Turkmenistan to undertake.

IMF review mission arrives in Pakistan for key economic assessment

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: A review mission of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) is set to arrive in Pakistan today for a 15-day visit to assess the country's economic performance under the ongoing loan programme.

The mission will remain in the country until March 11, holding negotiations in two phases — first in Karachi and later in Islamabad.

During the visit, the IMF team will evaluate Pakistan's economic performance for the first six months of the current fiscal year, from July to December.

The broad contours of the upcoming federal budget for the next fiscal year will also be part of the review schedule, indicating the significance of the discussions for future fiscal planning.

Sources in the Ministry of Finance stated that most IMF targets have been achieved, with the exception of tax revenue collection.

The Federal Board of Revenue (FBR)

faceted a shortfall of Rs329 billion in the first six months and Rs372 billion in seven months of the fiscal year.

The mission will be briefed in detail on the revenue gap and corrective measures.

The government is also considering requesting a downward revision of the annual tax target.

According to sources, the review will also cover provincial and overall fiscal frameworks, governance reforms, and anti-corruption measures. The performance of the National Accountability Bureau (NAB), along with accountability procedures in key institutions, will come under scrutiny.

Discussions are expected on strengthening the FBR's anti-corruption cell, making public officials' asset declarations transparent, and advancing the reform action plan.

Officials maintained that a primary fiscal surplus of around 1.3 percent of GDP has already been achieved, while provinces collectively delivered a cash surplus.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, holding a meeting with Ms Bolormaa Amgaabazar, Country Director of the World Bank for Pakistan, at the Finance Division.

TIKA continues Ramadan solidarity with families across Pakistan

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: The Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA), as part of its 2026 Ramadan initiatives, has successfully implemented a nationwide food assistance programme to support families in need across Pakistan, in collaboration with public institutions and civil society partners. The initiative was carried out in partnership with Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal, AJK Zakat Department, Ghazali Education Trust, Al Mustafa Welfare Society, Shah Jahan Mosque Community, and Idara Al Khair Welfare Society. The



programme reached vulnerable communities in Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Peshawar, Mardan, Muzaffarabad, Haveli Kahuta, Lahore, Multan, Hyderabad, Thatta, and various districts of Karachi, as well as Lasbela and Hub (Uthal) in Balochistan. Under this programme, food packages were distributed to

approximately 3,700 households nationwide. A distribution ceremony in Islamabad was held on February 25, 2026, in cooperation with Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal. The event was attended by H.E. Irfan Neziroglu, Ambassador of the Republic of Türkiye to Pakistan, and Ms. Saliha Tuna, Programme Coordinator of TIKA

FWO DG meets railways minister to review development, digitalization projects

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Director General of the Frontier Works Organization (FWO), Major General Abdul Sami, called on Federal Minister for Railways Muhammad Hanif Abbasi along with his team to discuss ongoing and proposed development initiatives in Pakistan Railways.

During the meeting, on Wednesday, the minister was given a detailed briefing on projects being executed with the cooperation of FWO, particularly those related to the modernization and digitalization of the railway system.

Officials said the first phase of railway digitalization would comprise 13 major projects aimed at upgrading the system on modern lines. Plans are underway to introduce a railway tracking system and GPS-based monitoring to



ensure more effective oversight of train operations.

The meeting also discussed the provision of Wi-Fi facilities at major railway stations and the establishment of locomotive check points to improve operational efficiency and passenger services.

Participants considered expanding the scope of Safe and Smart Railway Stations, modelled on the Rawalpindi station initiative, to other cities.

The establishment of a central control room in Lahore and control rooms in all HR divisions.

SAPM Haroon assures industry-friendly budget with relief, incentives for business community

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) on Industries and Production Haroon Akhtar Khan on Wednesday said that the upcoming budget would be industry-friendly and business-friendly, aimed at providing relief and incentives to the business community.

He said during a meeting with Minister for Defence Khawaja Muhammad Asif and discussed matters relating to Pakistan's economic growth, export promotion, and the upcoming federal budget, said a news release.

The meeting was also attended by a delegation from the Sialkot Chamber of Commerce



and Industry, which presented its proposals and recommendations for consideration in the forthcoming budget.

He said that proposals regarding tax relaxation and incentives are currently under review and that the government is committed to incorporating practical and growth-oriented measures. He emphasized that Pakistan's economic development remains the government's top priority.

Pakistani visitors to UK can now use eVisas

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Those travelling to the UK, including tourists, can now use a new eVisa system, receiving confirmation by email rather than stickers in passports.

Visitors will continue to submit their applications online and attend a visa application centre to provide biometrics. Successful applicants will have a digital record of their immigration status provided through an eVisa, accessible through an online UK Visas and Immigration account. Applicants no longer need to attend a visa application centre a second time to collect their passport, instead holding on to it after their biometrics session. eVisas provide a more secure way to manage immigration status and reduce the risk of lost or dam-



aged documents. Applicants can generate a share code to prove their visa status at borders and elsewhere. There is no change to visa processing times, eligibility criteria or conditions. British High Commissioner, Jane Marriott CMG OBE, said: "This is a hugely exciting step for Pakistanis visiting the UK for tourism, visiting loved ones, or business meetings, that removes a big step from the application process."

Islamabad. During the visit, Ambassador Neziroglu engaged with beneficiary families, extended Ramadan greetings, and shared warm interactions with mothers and children. Through this initiative, TIKA reaffirms its commitment to supporting communities during the holy month of Ramadan, while further strengthening the enduring friendship and people-to-people ties between Türkiye and Pakistan. The programme reflects the true spirit of Ramadan—solidarity, compassion, and brotherhood—bringing communities together and fostering hope among those in need.