



**Value addition, productivity push can make Pakistan global dairy leader: Ahsan**



**CM inaugurates Rajanpur's first modern green e-bus service**



**Pakistan, Kazakhstan agree to deepen trade, investment cooperation**

Founded By:  
(Late) Rehmat Khan

ABC CERTIFIED

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

Executive Group Editor  
Arif Mehmood Khan



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## Pakistan, Kazakhstan sign 37 agreements to strengthen bilateral ties

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: President of Kazakhstan, H.E. Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, arrived in Islamabad on a high-level diplomatic visit aimed at enhancing bilateral trade, investment, and regional connectivity between Pakistan and Kazakhstan.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif welcomed President Tokayev at the Prime Minister's House, where a guard of honour was presented in his honour.

During a joint press conference Pakistan and Kazakhstan signed 37 agreements and Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) across multiple sectors, including petroleum, mining, maritime affairs, agriculture, pharmaceuticals, textiles, and infrastructure develop-

ment, as part of efforts to boost bilateral trade and investment.

Speaking at the ceremony, PM Shehbaz welcomed President Tokayev, noting that it was "the first visit by a Kazakh president in 23 years." He described the day's meetings as "very productive" and said the 37 MoUs signed should soon be converted into actionable agreements, with a focus on speedy implementation. "If we turn these MoUs into reality, our economic, trade, and cultural relations will reach new heights," he added.

Separately, Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan met with Kazakhstan's Minister of Trade and Integration Arman Shaqaliev to discuss expanding economic cooperation.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif receiving H.E. Mr Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, President of the Republic of Kazakhstan before bilateral talks at Prime Minister House.

## 9th Int'l Pakistan Army team spirit competition 2026 begins

PEAK POINT



RAWALPINDI: The 9th International Pakistan Army Team Spirit (PATS) Competition 2026 kicked off at the National Counter Terrorism Centre

(NCTC), Pabbi. The competition aims to enhance military-to-military cooperation among contingents from friendly countries, said a news release issued by the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR). The inaugural event, which marked the start of 60 hours long Patrolling Exercise, was attended by a Senior Officer. A total of 24 international teams from 19 friendly countries, along with military observers, are participating in the competition. Participating countries include Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, Maldives, Morocco, Nepal, Qatar, Sri Lanka, Türkiye, United States of America, and Uzbekistan. Additionally, Indonesia, Myanmar, and Thailand are participating as observers, it further said. Sixteen domestic teams from Pakistan Army and Pakistan Navy, along with observers from the Pakistan Air Force, are also taking part in the exercise. Pakistan Army Team.

## Field Marshal Asim Munir visits Quetta to review security operations against Indian-sponsored terrorism

PEAK POINT

RAWALPINDI: Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), HJ, COAS & CDF, visited Quetta today. Field Marshal received a comprehensive operational briefing on the prevailing security environment and internal security operations. The briefing covered recent terrorist attacks orchestrated by Indian backed internationally-designated terrorists of Fitna al Hindustan and the prompt aggressive response of security forces which failed their ulterior motive of compromising peace, stability, and development in Balochistan. Measures being undertaken to further strengthen the writ of the state and ensure



protection of the populace and critical infrastructure were also discussed. The COAS & CDF remarked that no terrorist and its facilitator will be spared and all will be dealt strictly as per law and that no one can rationalise violence and terrorism on any pretext. He appreciated the professionalism, valour, and

sacrifices of officers and troops of all law enforcement agencies in thwarting nefarious anti-Pakistan designs and maintaining law and order. Later, Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir along with CM Balochistan visited Combined Military Hospital (CMH) Quetta, where he met the

Uzbekistan president to arrive in Pakistan today on 2-day visit

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: The Foreign Office (FO) said on Wednesday that Uzbekistan President Shavkat Mirziyoyev would arrive in Pakistan on Thursday (tomorrow) on a two-day official visit. In a statement, the FO said that at the invitation of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, the president would lead a high-level delegation, comprising cabinet ministers and business leaders for the state visit on Feb 5-6. FO added that the visiting dignitary.

PUC announces Day of Condemnation on Friday over Balochistan attack

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Ulema Council (PUC) has announced that Friday, February 6, will be observed as a Day of Condemnation in response to the recent terrorist incident in Balochistan.

According to a statement issued by the council on Wednesday, tributes will be paid on the day to the martyrs and veterans, as well as to the Pakistan Army, Balochistan Police and other security institutions. The council said expressions of solidarity would also be made.

## Pakistan to join Iran-US talks on de-escalating regional tensions, FO confirms

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan will participate in upcoming Iran-US talks in Istanbul, aimed at easing tensions between Tehran and Washington, the Foreign Office confirmed on Tuesday.

Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar will represent at the talks. The discussions, scheduled to reach their main session on Friday, will also include regional powers such as Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Egypt, Oman, and the United Arab Emirates.

A regional official told Reuters that the priority of the talks is to avoid any conflict and de-escalate rising tensions. While the format of the meetings remains unclear, officials emphasised the importance of dialogue to prevent further escalation.



The talks come amid heightened regional concerns, including the recent deployment of a US aircraft carrier group to the Middle East following anti-government protests in Iran. Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian confirmed on Tuesday that he had authorised his Foreign Minister, Abbas Araghchi, to engage in nuclear negotiations with the United States, provided the discussions occur in an environment "free from threats and unreasonable expecta-

expects sanctions relief in return.

US President Donald Trump has reiterated his hope that Washington will reach an agreement with Iran, while warning that "bad things would happen" if no deal is achieved. Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, has warned that any US military action could trigger a regional war. Türkiye has spearheaded the diplomatic initiative with Foreign Minister Araghchi meeting counterparts in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan in recent days. Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Jordan have all assured Tehran that their airspace or territories will not be used for any military action against Iran, highlighting the focus on diplomacy and regional stability.

## US leftover weapons in Afghanistan being used for terrorism in Pakistan: CNN Report



PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Modern US-made weapons abandoned in Afghanistan following the American withdrawal are reportedly being used in terrorist attacks in Pakistan, raising serious security concerns across the region. A detailed report by CNN states that these weapons now pose a significant threat not only to Pakistan but also to Afghanistan's neighboring countries. The arms were originally supplied to strengthen the capacity of the former Afghan military but were left behind in large quantities during the US exit. According to John Sopko, former head of the US Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) approximately 300,000 advanced US weapons remained in Afghanistan at the time of withdrawal. CNN reports that terrorist groups accessing these weapons have increased the intensity and scale of attacks, creating particular concerns for Pakistan.



# SPORTS



## Saim Ayub claims top spot in ICC T20 all-rounder rankings after 'excellent showings' against Australia



**PEAK POINT** ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's Saim Ayub has reclaimed the top spot in the ICC Men's T20 All-Rounder Rankings on the back of "some excellent showings" during the recently concluded three-match series against Australia.

International Cricket Council (ICC) said on Wednesday that Saim moved up one slot to regain the top spot in the monthly rankings, replacing Zimbabwe veteran Sikandar Raza.

The cricket's governing body said the development "bodes well for Ayub and ranked Varun Chakravarty of India following six wickets across three matches against the Aussies", the ICC announcement said.

Fellow spinner Mohammad Nawaz also leaped eight slots to claim the seventh position on the list following his five-wicket haul in the last match of the series against Australia.

## India beat Afghanistan by seven wickets to reach U19 World Cup Final



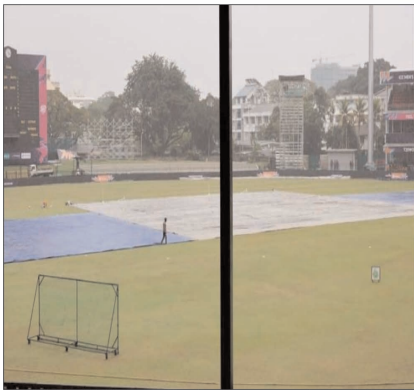
**PEAK POINT** HARARE: In the second semi-final of the ICC Under-19 Cricket World Cup, India defeated Afghanistan by seven wickets to secure a place in the final.

India successfully chased a challenging target of 311 runs in just 41.1 overs, losing three wickets in the process. Aaron George led the way with a commanding 115 runs, while Surya Vanshi contributed 68 and Ayush Mahatre added 62.

Earlier in Harare, Afghanistan won the toss and elected to bat first. The side posted a competitive total of 310 for four in their allotted 50 overs. Faisal Shanozada was the standout performer with a brilliant 110, complemented by Azirullah Niazi's 101. Other contributors included Usman Sadat (39), Khalid Ahmadi (31), and Azizullah Miyakhil (12).

In the first semi-final, England defeated Australia to secure the other spot in the final. The U19 World Cup final will be played on 6 February in Harare between India and England.

## T20 World Cup warm-up: Pakistan vs Ireland match abandoned due to rain



**PEAK POINT** COLOMBO: The T20 World Cup warm-up match between Pakistan and Ireland was abandoned due to persistent rain in Colombo, organisers

confirmed. The fixture, scheduled to take place in Sri Lanka's capital, could not even reach the toss stage as heavy rainfall left the ground unfit for play. Large

inspections but conditions did not improve sufficiently, leading to the decision to call off the contest without a ball being bowled. The wet outfield and standing water across several areas of the ground ruled out any chance of play throughout the day. The warm-up fixture was part of Pakistan's preparations ahead of the T20 World Cup, with the team set to begin their tournament campaign on 7 February against the Netherlands. No further updates were issued regarding rescheduling, as warm-up matches are subject to tight timelines and weather conditions in the region.

## FG Polo, SQ Seagold win 49th Ecostar Aibak Polo Cup openers



## Spin-heavy Pakistan hit form, but India boycott risks early T20 exit

**PEAK POINT** ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's spin-heavy squad are in winning form ahead of the T20 World Cup, but a controversial decision to forfeit their marquee clash against India could still trigger another early exit.

Pakistan came close to withdrawing from the tournament in solidarity with Bangladesh, who pulled out after refusing to play in India, citing security concerns.

The Pakistan government eventually cleared the team's participation but it barred them from facing India in Colombo in a blockbuster clash on February 15.

on Saturday and beat the United States three days later to stay in contention. Their final group game will be against Namibia on February 18. Captain Salman Agha said the move to boycott the India game was out

of the team's hands. "That is not our decision. We have to follow what our government decides," he said. The Pakistan government has not said what their stance might be if the team were to end up facing India again in the semi-finals or final. Agha was not thinking about that. "Our job is to win, and we



of the team's hands. "That is not our decision. We have to follow what our government decides," he said. The Pakistan government has not said what their stance might be if the team were to end up facing India again in the semi-finals or final. Agha was not thinking about that. "Our job is to win, and we

are capable of doing that," he said. Pakistan will be keen to avoid a repeat of the last T20 World Cup in 2024, where a shock super over defeat to co-hosts the United States led to them failing to get out of the group. The side has since

## Captain Malik backs Davis Cup team to overcome Senegal





# Hajj 2026 tender under senate spotlight as lawmakers question shortlisting, tawaffa quota split, and contracting gaps

NADEEM TANOLI

ISLAMABAD: The Senate Standing Committee on Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony put the Government Hajj Scheme for Hajj 2026 under intense scrutiny after senators raised concerns over the shortlisting of service providers and the allocation of Tawaffa services, while the ministry defended its tender process as transparent and PPR-compliant and said performance in Hajj 2026 will ultimately prove the merit of selections. The meeting was held at Old PIPS Hall, Parliament Lodges, Islamabad, under the chairmanship of Senator Atta Ur Rehman, and attended by Senators Danesh Kumar, Hafiz Abdul Karim, Husna Bano, Bushra Anjum Butt, Samina Mumtaz Zehri, Sarmad Ali and Atta-ul-Haq Derwaish. The Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony also joined the pro-

ceedings. A major flashpoint emerged when Senator Danesh Kumar questioned why, despite 34 companies being approved by Saudi authorities, only six were shortlisted for service provision. The Ministry replied that Pakistan's population-linked requirements shaped the process, stating that 19 companies applied and only six met the criteria, with Al Rajhi emerging on merit. The committee was also told that Al Rajhi has capacity for up to 80,000 Hujjaj and is empanelled with Saudi authorities. However, the ministry could not answer when asked which other countries the company serves, prompting the committee to note that the real test would be service delivery during Hajj 2026. The committee was briefed that under Saudi policy, each country can engage a minimum of one and a maximum of two Tawaffa companies. After evaluation, the ministry allocated 80% of the service

quota to Al Rajhi and 20% to Rawaf Minia, both at a rate of SR 2,635 per pilgrim. The rationale presented was Al Rajhi's stronger track record and highest technical and financial ranking, with officials also claiming the company offered more competitive and economical rates. The chairman cautioned that the sacred nature of Hajj should not be reduced to a purely commercial exercise, while the ministry insisted a grievance redressal mechanism existed and objections raised by one company were examined. Officials informed senators that a seven-member Hiring and Procurement Committee was constituted for Hajj 2026 procurement, comprising one BS-21 officer, two BS-20, one BS-19, and three BS-18 officers from the Ministry, OPAP, and the Consulate General of Pakistan. The committee floated a Request for Proposal under PPR rules, applying technical evaluation criteria and then opening

financial bids, with awards recommended to the "most advantageous" bidders. The ministry said decisions were taken unanimously. Alongside tender questions, lawmakers reviewed progress on welfare staffing. The ministry presented details of the selection process for Khuddam-ul-Hujjaj and Nazims, stating that a Document Scrutiny Committee headed by a BS-20 officer is finalizing scrutiny and any discrepancy will result in cancellation of candidature with selection moving to the next candidate on merit. Under the Nazim scheme, the committee was told that one Nazim will be deployed for every group of 188 pilgrims, and a total of 635 welfare staff will serve as Nazims. Other staff will be posted at operational points including Hajj terminals in Jeddah and Madinah, transport, accommodation, food services, complaint cells, lost-and-found units and Haram guidance. A two-week

intensive training programme is scheduled for March 2026, focusing on operational duties, facilitation and healthcare support. The private Hajj sector was also discussed, with the HOAP briefing the committee that 2025 was the only year when private sector pilgrims could not travel due to disruption, but affected pilgrims were accommodated in the following year or refunded fully without deduction. The committee was told the private sector currently includes 904 registered HGO agencies nationwide. Statistical updates on contracting were shared as well. The committee was informed that 16,193 pilgrims remained for contracting out of a total quota of 60,000, and that there were 24 completed contracts and one partial contract of four operators. Progress on housing contracts in Madinah Munawwarah against the total quota of 60,000 was also briefed. In a broader operational discussion, the

ministry said Saudi Vision 2030 reforms are being introduced in phases, including country-specific arrangements and even a theme colour for Pakistan reflecting provincial representation. The committee also took up legislative business, disposing of The Muslim Family Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2024 introduced by Senator Syed Ali Zafar due to the mover's absence. A bill introduced by Senator Samina Mumtaz Zehri was deferred, while The Muslim Family Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2026 introduced by Senator Sarmad Ali was deferred pending comments from the Council of Islamic Ideology. The meeting ended with a stated resolve to safeguard the sanctity of Hajj and ensure transparency, while senators signaled that Hajj 2026 service quality would be watched closely to determine whether the tender outcomes truly matched merit and public trust.

## Law Minister meets delegations of various bars

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Law and Justice, Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar Wednesday, met delegations from various bar associations and assured them of capacity building and development of the bars.

Representatives from Jhang, Toba Tek Singh, Pir Mahal, and Bhera bar associations have attended the meetings.

During the interactions, matters relating to the welfare of lawyers, institutional strengthening of bar associa-



tions, and facilitation of the legal community were discussed.

The Federal Law Minister briefed the delegations on government initiatives for the legal fraternity and reaffirmed the government's commitment to


addressing lawyers' concerns as a priority.

The visiting delegations appreciated the government's continued engagement with the legal community and expressed confidence in the Ministry of Law and Justice's efforts to

strengthen bar institutions.

Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar reiterated that lawyers are an integral pillar of the justice system and assured full cooperation and sustained support for the development and capacity building of bar associations.

# Opinion & Editorial


  
**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

## Growth prescription

**EHSAN MALIK**  
AS Pakistan experiences sluggish economic growth, there is a growing trend of impatience being presented as policy advice. Increasingly, there are calls to either abandon or dilute the IMF programme, with critics pointing to high interest rates, elevated taxes and costly energy as justification. While these concerns are valid, the conclusion that leaving the IMF would restore growth is misguided. In reality, abandoning the IMF programme would likely reignite the instability that made external support necessary in the first place. The true challenge for Pakistan is not a choice between stabilisation and growth, but rather how to use the limited fiscal space created by stabilisation to support productive activity without violating IMF commitments. This fiscal space does exist, and now more than ever, it must be deployed wisely.

External pressures and competitiveness: The urgency of this task has increased due to the EU-India trade agreement, which will gradually reduce tariffs on Indian exports to the EU — Pakistan's largest export market, accounting for about 40 per cent of its exports, mainly textiles. This development represents a direct shock to Pakistan's competitiveness. Preference erosion will be gradual but persistent. Without tariff preference relative to India, exports from Pakistan are vulnerable. Even without duty-free access, India exports

nearly as much textile and apparel to the EU as Pakistan, and with significant overlap in product lines, substitution is inevitable. As tariffs decrease, Indian exports could become 10-12pc cheaper than before. India is also working to recapture the exports it lost as a result of US tariffs. Any further deterioration in Pakistan's cost, quality, or delivery will quickly lead to lost orders and more idle capacity, as well as pressure on jobs and foreign exchange reserves.

Some estimates suggest that Pakistan could lose up to \$2 billion from its current \$9bn to \$10bn in annual EU exports. Therefore, maintaining market share in Europe requires more than generic appeals to industrial revival — it demands precise, targeted interventions. The primary constraint is fiscal space.

Policy rate and fiscal space: One starting point is the policy rate. Once inflation expectations are firmly anchored and foreign exchange reserves exceed \$20bn, a 100-basis-point reduction in policy rates would have significant fiscal implications. Even accounting for delays in repricing and transmission, a one-percentage point reduction in the average cost of domestic borrowing could save Rs450bn to Rs550bn annually in debt-servicing costs over time, depending on the maturity structure. Additional fiscal space can also be created by containing non-development expenditures.

The hard reality is that

Pakistan cannot simply spend, borrow, or subsidise its way to growth. Importantly, this space should be explicitly redirected towards growth-enabling interventions. Three main priorities emerge: Supporting export-oriented industry: While broad-based tax reductions are limited under the IMF programme, targeted relief for exporters is both fiscally efficient and beneficial for the external sector. Minimum taxes on turnover and advance taxes, for which refunds take years, are particularly detrimental to exporters' cash flows. Since exports are vital for Pakistan's economy, relying instead on commercial borrowing to build reserves is expensive, with the country's 10-year bond yield exceeding 10pc. Rationalising electricity tariffs for export sectors and eliminating cross-subsidies in industrial power prices would directly enhance competitiveness. Instead of a piecemeal, reactionary approach, the government should conduct a comprehensive benchmarking of costs, levies and taxes with Pakistan's major export competitors and address the gaps.

Incentivising diversification: Pakistan's export base remains narrow not due to a lack of incentives, but because existing schemes are misdirected — rewarding scale in established products rather than encouraging diversification. In a global context where competitors are securing preferential access to major trade blocs, this approach is unsustainable.

Courtesy Dawn

## ESG in Pakistan: promises versus reality

MIRZA MUJTABA BAIG

IN global finance, Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) principles are being marketed as a quiet revolution. Capital, we are told, has discovered a conscience, and sustainability now walks hand in hand with profitability. With ESG-linked assets forming a growing share of global investment, the message for Pakistan seems straightforward: align with ESG or risk being left behind. But before embracing this narrative, a harder question must be asked. Is ESG in Pakistan becoming a genuine tool to protect people and the planet, or is it drifting toward yet another well-crafted framework that looks impressive on paper while leaving structural damage intact?

Pakistan sits at the intersection of overlapping crises. It ranks poorly on global competitiveness, remains among the most climate-vulnerable countries and faces recurring floods, heatwaves, energy shortages and widening inequality. These are not distant threats but lived realities. In theory, ESG frameworks are designed to address precisely these risks. In practice, however, the danger lies in mistaking formal adoption for real transformation. There is visible institutional momentum. The Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) and the Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) have introduced ESG task forces, roadmaps, disclosure guidelines and international partnerships. These moves signal awareness and intent. Yet intent alone does not rebuild washed-away villages, clean polluted air or stabilise fragile livelihoods. Regulation lies at the heart of Pakistan's ESG push. While evolving frameworks are necessary, enforcement remains uneven. The real risk is that ESG becomes another compliance ritual by companies learning to speak the language of sustainability without changing how they actually operate.

Courtesy Tribune

## Honest appraisal

FOLLOWING last week's terrorist attacks in Balochistan, the province's volatile security situation has come under greater scrutiny in both houses of parliament. While resolutions condemning the terrorist atrocities have been adopted in the Senate and National Assembly, many lawmakers, particularly those in the opposition, have pointed out that greater debate is needed to address the root causes of the violence. In contrast, treasury politicians have rejected the idea of socioeconomic issues fuelling the long-running wave of separatist terrorism in the province. For example, Defence Minister Khawaja Asif criticised the narrative of disparity in the NA, saying this was being exploited by banned groups such as the BLA. He also rattled off figures comparing the growth in the number of health and education facilities in the province from independence to date. Prime ministerial adviser Rana Sanaullah expressed similar feelings in the Senate, saying "no one is angry in Balochistan; there is no issue of rights". However, NA opposition leader Mehmood Achakzai, who hails from Balochistan, asserted that the "unjust distribution of resources" in the province had fuelled deprivation, which is driving terrorism.

## First Lady participates in the 2026 Zayed Award for Human Fraternity Majlis in Abu Dhabi



PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: First Lady, Bibi Aseefa Bhutto Zardari, MNA on Wednesday participated in the 2026 Zayed Award for Human Fraternity Majlis in Abu Dhabi, on the invitation of the Government of the United Arab Emirates.

The Majlis is a cornerstone convening within the annual calendar of the Zayed Award for Human Fraternity, reflecting the UAE's enduring commitment to coexistence, compassion, dialogue, and human unity.

This year's Majlis carried particu-

lar significance as it was held under the theme of the "Year of the Family," echoing the vision of Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan that the family remains the foundation of national strength, prosperity, and continuity, according to a press release issued by the President House Media Wing.

Rooted in the Emirati majlis tradition, defined by humility, wisdom, and hospitality, the gathering brought together global leaders, thinkers, and changemakers to engage in open and reflective dialogue aimed at translating shared human values into practi-

cal and inclusive outcomes. The first lady participated in a high-level panel titled "Female Leadership at the Heart of Human Fraternity," a distinguished dialogue bringing together influential women leaders whose work has strengthened the social fabric of their nations. The session was moderated by Mina Al-Oraibi, Editor-in-Chief of The National (UAE). The discussion highlighted leadership models grounded in empathy, moral courage, and inclusive governance, underscoring how resilient families often form the starting point for cohesive communities and enduring social harmony.

During her remarks, the first lady reflected on the legacy of her mother, Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, Pakistan's first female Prime Minister and the first woman to lead a Muslim-majority country. She emphasised that trust in public institutions cannot be built through instructions alone, but through listening, continuity, and genuine engagement at the communi-

## Value addition, productivity push can make Pakistan global dairy leader: Ahsan

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal on Wednesday said Pakistan has the capacity to become the world's leading dairy producer if productivity gaps and supply chain weaknesses were addressed through technology, better management and value addition.

Addressing a National Dairy Conference here, he highlighted the country's strong livestock base but said low per-animal yield, high wastage and limited processing were preventing Pakistan from fully benefiting from its dairy potential.

"Pakistan is the fourth largest milk-producing country in the world, but our average dairy yield is around 1,800 to 2,000 litres, whereas leading



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal on Wednesday said Pakistan has the capacity to become the world's leading dairy producer if productivity gaps and supply chain weaknesses were addressed through technology, better management and value addition.

countries have reached 8,000 to 14,000 litres," he said. "If we only double our dairy productivity, we can become the number one milk-producing economy in the world," he added.

The minister said the sector's untapped potential was being lost due to weak management systems and insufficient value addition. "Nearly 15 percent of our milk production goes to waste and less than 10 percent is processed, while over 90 percent remains in the informal and unhygienic sector," he noted.

## Pakistan, Kazakhstan agree to deepen trade, investment cooperation

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan held a comprehensive bilateral meeting with Arman Shaqaliev, Minister of Trade and Integration of the Republic of Kazakhstan, at the Ministry of Commerce, Islamabad, to review the current state of bilateral trade and explore concrete avenues for expanding economic cooperation, connectivity, and investment, said a release issued here on Wednesday.

The meeting focused extensively on addressing connectivity challenges between Pakistan and Central Asia and identifying practical solutions to unlock the full trade potential between the two countries.

Both sides agreed that improved rail, road, and multimodal connectivity is fundamental to strengthening Pakistan-Kazakhstan trade and enabling sustainable, long-term economic engagement.

The Kazakh Minister highlighted the strategic importance of developing major infrastructure projects, particularly railway

and road corridors, noting that such initiatives could generate trade and investment flows worth approximately \$5 billion while creating employment opportunities and supporting regional supply chains.

He emphasized Kazakhstan's vision of becoming a regional hub connecting Central Asia with South Asia, China, Europe, and the Global South, including Pakistan's ports.

Federal Minister Jam Kamal Khan underscored Pakistan's strong interest in enhancing direct connectivity with Central Asia through Turkmenistan and Afghanistan, while acknowledging regional and geopolitical challenges. He stressed that improved transit routes would not only benefit Pakistan and Kazakhstan but also open broader opportunities for regional and global trade, including access to African and ASEAN markets through Pakistan's ports.

Both ministers discussed cooperation in priority sectors, including agriculture and food security, pharmaceuticals, textiles, sports goods, leather products, mining and minerals, energy, and infrastructure development.

## Shaza Fatima arrives in Kuwait on two-day visit

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication Shaza Fatima Khawaja arrived in Kuwait on Wednesday on a two-day official visit.

During the visit, she will hold several high-level meetings with global leaders and counterparts from member countries.

According to a news release, the minister will attend the General Assembly of the Digital Cooperation Organization (DCO) and meet representatives of member states.

She will also participate in the opening ceremony of the DCO's fifth General Assembly, where she is scheduled to interact with global leaders and deliver a keynote address.

Shaza Fatima will take part in the DCO's thematic ministerial roundtable and hold meetings with ministers from member countries.

Discussions during the visit will focus on artificial intelligence and its related risks.

## CM inaugurates Rajanpur's first modern green e-bus service

PEAK POINT

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif on Wednesday inaugurated Rajanpur's first state-of-the-art green electric bus, introducing a modern public transport facility in the district.

On her arrival, the chief minister received a traditional welcome with regional drums and a Balochi shawl presentation, said a handout issued here.

The CM traveled on the electric bus from DHQ Kitab Chowk to PCB Chowk Chain Mari, while girls showered flower petals and recited verses in her honour.

Provincial Minister for Mines Sher Ali Gorchani thanked the chief minister on behalf of the people of Rajanpur, highlighting



her commitment to the district alongside initiatives in law and order, Suthra Punjab, and recruitment in the Border Military Police. Provincial Minister for Transport Bilal Akbar Khan briefed the audience that 15 electric buses are now operating on three routes in Rajanpur, including Rajanpur-Fazilpur, Rajanpur-Kot Mithan, and the city circular road.

The launch was met with enthusiastic applause from participants.

## PM's Focal Person reviews Polio eradication efforts in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

PEAK POINT

PESHAWAR: Prime Minister's Focal Person for Polio Eradication, Ms. Ayesha Raza Farooq, on Tuesday met with Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Shahab Ali Shah and Secretary Health KP Shahid Ullah at the Chief Secretary's Office to review ongoing efforts and future strategies for the eradication of polio across the province. During the meeting, participants held a detailed discussion on the overall polio situation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, with a comprehensive review of the progress of the current vaccination campaign. Special attention was given to hard-to-reach and



previously missed areas, where operational challenges—particularly those arising from adverse weather conditions—have affected vaccination activities. Ms. Ayesha Raza Farooq emphasized the need to further strengthen routine immunization and enhance coordination between the Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI) and the Polio Eradication Initiative (PEI).



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan held a comprehensive bilateral meeting with Arman Shaqaliev, Minister of Trade and Integration of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

## IRS-MoIB host reception for Kazakhstan media delegation



PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: The Institute of Regional Studies (IRS), Islamabad, in collaboration with the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MoIB), jointly hosted a reception in honour of a Kazakhstan Media Delegation at the Pak-China Friendship Centre, Islamabad. The reception featured addresses by Mr.

Ataullah Tarar, Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting; H.E. Mr. Yerzhan Kistafin, Ambassador of Kazakhstan to Pakistan; Ambassador Jauhar Saleem, President IRS; Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed; and Mr. Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Tourism. The event provided a valuable platform for

exchanging perspectives on deepening bilateral relations and enhancing cooperation between the media communities of Pakistan and Kazakhstan. Prominent voices from academia and the media fraternity, including Dr. Adam Saud, Professor, Bahria University Islamabad; Dr. Taraq Waheed, Head of Department, SZABIST; senior anchors and journalists

Mr. Shaukat Paracha and Mr. Ferooz Hassan; as well as Mr. Yargali, a journalist from Kazakhstan, highlighted the growing importance of Pakistan-Kazakhstan relations at a time of renewed bilateral momentum. The reception was also attended by a number of distinguished guests, including Ms. Farah Naz Akbar (Parliamentary Secretary Federal Education

& Professional Training), Ms. Shamaila Rana (MNA), Mr. Ashfaq Ahmad Khalid, Secretary Information; and Ms. Raisa Adil, Executive Director General, External Publicity Wing, MoIB, among others. The event drew a diverse audience comprising media professionals, academics, diplomats, and senior government officials, reflecting broad-based interest in

Pakistan's expanding engagement with Central Asia. In his address, Mr. Ataullah Tarar emphasized the strategic importance of Pakistan-Kazakhstan relations and called for broader, sustained, and meaningful cooperation across key sectors, including energy, culture, tourism, trade, education, science and technology, media, and people-to-people exchanges.