

**President Zardari extends condolence over assassination of Dr Larijani**



**Dar arrives in Riyadh for meeting of regional FMs**



**Wani calls for International Commission of Inquiry into crimes against humanity in IIOJK**

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**DAILY PEAK POINT ISLAMABAD**

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# PM orders swift actions to make housing loans accessible for people

**PEAK POINT**  
 ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday directed the relevant authorities to take practical steps to ensure effective access to housing finance for the common people. He said that providing housing to low-income groups, promoting affordable housing projects, including encouragement of the private sector, and improving public facilities were among the government's top priorities. The prime minister was speaking while chairing a meeting on the matters related to the Federal Ministry of Housing and Works held at the Prime Minister's House. During the meeting, a briefing was given on the strategic roadmap of the Ministry of Housing and Works. It was informed that reforms were being made to the

tax structure related to the construction sector. "Consultations between the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) and the provinces are ongoing regarding tax standardization for the construction industry, and discussions are also underway on draft reforms concerning housing mortgages," the meeting was told. The meeting was further informed that a framework was being prepared for the construction of homes for low-income groups under Public-Private Partnership (PPP). The briefing added that a Real Estate Regulatory Authority will be established to regulate the real estate and housing sectors. "Regarding housing finance, the Ministry of Finance, FBR, the Securities and Exchange Commission, and provincial governments are working together with the Ministry.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting on the matters related to Federal Ministry of Housing and Works.

# DG ISPR rubbishes 'ridiculous' Afghan claim of targeting drug rehab centre, says Pakistan hit ammo storage site

**PEAK POINT**  
 RAWALPINDI: Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) Director-General Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry on Wednesday rubbished what he said was the "ridiculous" claim of Pakistan targeting a drug rehabilitation centre in Afghanistan, saying that the military had targeted an ammunition storage depot. On Tuesday, the Taliban regime's deputy spokesperson Hamdullah Fitrat claimed in a post on X that an airstrike had hit the Omid Addiction Treatment Hospital, killing up to 400 people in the Afghan capital overnight. However, Pakistan forcefully rejected the Afghan Taliban's claims, terming the allegations "entirely baseless" and part of a wider pattern of misinformation aimed at distorting facts. Information Minister Attaullah Tarar had said the strikes carried out were "precise, deliberate and professional", targeting only military and terrorist infrastructure linked to attacks inside Pakistan. Meanwhile, an official told Reuters today that the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan.



ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has announced a temporary pause in its ongoing military campaign, Operation Ghazab-lil-Haq, in a move described as a goodwill gesture ahead of Eid-ul-Fitr. The decision was confirmed by Information Minister Attaullah Tarar on Tuesday, saying the pause reflects both Pakistan's own initiative and requests from key Islamic allies. The government stated that the halt in operations comes amid the religious significance of Eid-ul-Fitr, a major Islamic festival marked by millions across the Muslim world. It also follows diplomatic outreach from Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Turkey, described as brotherly nations.

# Major attack averted as 'would-be' female suicide bomber arrested in Khuzdar: CM Bugti

**PEAK POINT**  
 QUETTA: Balochistan Chief Minister Sarfaraz Bugti on Wednesday said security forces arrested a "would-be" female suicide bomber in Khuzdar, with the help of "human intelligence". Addressing a press conference in Quetta, alongside the alleged "would-be" suicide bomber, the chief minister said that terrorist groups in Balochistan were "exploiting" Baloch women. CM Bugti reiterated his appreciation to the people of Balochistan, "who are giving us information". However, he noted that the mindset of young Baloch people was changing, recalling that security agencies receiving human intelligence in such operations

found it unfortunate that a "young woman was radicalised and was being planned to be used against common citizens". CM Bugti reiterated his appreciation to the people of Balochistan, "who are giving us information". However, he noted that the mindset of young Baloch people was changing, recalling that security agencies receiving human intelligence in such operations was a "rare occurrence" in the recent past. He maintained that the state remained respectful of women's honour; however, groups making use of women in their activities "left security forces with no option but to check vehicles, even when women are sitting inside". The chief minister held that the people of Balochistan were "being pushed into an endless war", stressing that "nothing will be achieved except for bloodshed". Bugti said the arrested woman will be interrogated in the "presence of female police personnel", stressing that the state was cognisant of its responsibility to ensure that she suffers "no physical harm, moral harm or harassment". "This is the difference between terrorists and us — that we are giving respect and honour to the suicide bomber despite her plans to kill us," he said. The chief minister lauded the security forces for their efforts, stating, "I am proud of the security forces, security agencies, police, and army".



ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Airport Authority (PAA) has extended airspace restrictions on Indian aircraft till April 24, according to a fresh notice to airmen (Notam) issued on Wednesday. The authority said that Pakistan's airspace would remain closed to all aircraft registered in India. The restriction would also continue to apply to aircraft operated, owned, or leased by Indian airlines or operators, the Notam said, adding that it also covered Indian military flights. Pakistan's airspace is divided.

# Pakistan extends airspace ban on Indian aircraft till April 24

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# Pak Armed Forces foil major infiltration attempt in NW

**PEAK POINT**  
 PESHAWAR: Pak Armed Forces have successfully foiled a major infiltration attempt of Afghan Taliban and Fitna al-Khwariz terrorists in the border area of Mawaz Kalay of North Waziristan by timely action. Security sources said that the Afghan Taliban were planning to enter into Pakistan's soil. However, owing to effective operation by the Pakistan Army, several Afghan Taliban were killed, while others fled after abandoning their posts, they said.

# Pakistan announces pause in Operation Ghazab-lil-Haq ahead of Eid-ul-Fitr

**PEAK POINT**  
 ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has announced a temporary pause in its ongoing military campaign, Operation Ghazab-lil-Haq, in a move described as a goodwill gesture ahead of Eid-ul-Fitr. The decision was confirmed by Information Minister Attaullah Tarar on Tuesday, saying the pause reflects both Pakistan's own initiative and requests from key Islamic allies. The government stated that the halt in operations comes amid the religious significance of Eid-ul-Fitr, a major Islamic festival marked by millions across the Muslim world. It also follows diplomatic outreach from Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Turkey, described as brotherly nations. According to the official statement, the suspension of the operation is in request of the brotherly Islamic countries of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the State of Qatar and the Republic of Turkey. Authorities indicated that the pause applies to ongoing operations targeting terrorist elements and their support infrastructure located across the border in Afghanistan. The move is being framed as part of Pakistan's adherence to Islamic traditions and its commitment to regional goodwill during a period of religious importance. Officials noted that the decision reflects a balance between operational priorities and respect for religious and diplomatic considerations. Despite the temporary halt, the government made it clear that the suspension remains conditional. Authorities warned that any cross-border aggression, including drone incursions or terrorist attacks within Pakistan, would trigger an immediate resumption of Operation Ghazab-lil-Haq. The statement emphasised that in such an event, the operation would restart with renewed intensity. Security agencies remain on alert during the pause period, maintaining readiness to respond to any potential threats.



# Iran vows to avenge Ali Larijani assassination by Israel

**PEAK POINT**  
 IRAN: Iran vowed on Wednesday a "decisive" retaliation for the death of its security chief Ali Larijani, firing off a wave of missiles at Israel which said it killed him in an airstrike. A barrage of Iranian missiles killed two people near Israel's commercial hub Tel Aviv, while Gulf nations intercepted rockets and drones headed for targets including US bases in the region. Iran will hold funerals on Wednesday for Larijani and another powerful figure killed on Tuesday by Israel, Gholamreza Soleimani, the head of the Basij paramilitary force, according to the Fars and Tasnim news agencies. Larijani is the most prominent figure of the Islamic republic killed since Israel and the United States launched their attacks on Iran on February 28, killing Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and igniting a war in the Middle East. "Iran's response to the assassination of the secretary of the Supreme National Security Council will be decisive and regrettable," Iranian army chief Amir Hatami said in a statement.





# SPORTS



## Reason behind Babar's exclusion from Bangladesh ODIs revealed



PEAK POINT

KARACHI: Was Babar Azam unfit or dropped? The mystery has been solved. The senior batter was not included in the national squad for the Bangladesh tour due to being out of form.

Later, when he refused to play in the National T20 Cup citing pain in his leg, PCB doctor Javed Mughal examined his injury, which turned out to be serious, and treatment was started.

According to details, the selection committee had not included Babar Azam in the squad for the Bangladesh tour due to his poor performance in the World Cup.

Later, coach Mike Hesson said that Babar was not dropped, but rested to give opportunities to young players.

Recently, in a press conference, selector Aaqib Javed said: "Babar was out due to fitness issues, and similarly Fakhar is also not fit. We will ask the board to investigate how this happened, especially since neither of them played any cricket after the World Cup."

These contradictory statements created confusion. Sources claimed that both Babar Azam and Fakhar Zaman participated in the T20 World Cup despite incom-

plete fitness, which also affected Babar's performance. The selectors were unaware of this and had picked them based on the clearance report of team physio Cliff Deacon.

Recently, when the National T20 Cup was about to begin, Babar declined participation citing minor leg pain. However, when UK-based PCB Director of Sports and Exercise Medicine Dr. Javed Mughal examined him, the injury appeared serious. Fakhar Zaman also did not seem fully fit, raising questions about how both players were included in the World Cup squad. PCB officials are now try-

ing to uncover the facts.

Sources further revealed that during the recent Bangladesh tour, Mohammad Rizwan was also not fully fit. Young batter Maaz Sadaqat appeared injured before the third match, but due to a shortage of players, he had to be fielded and bowled only one over. Earlier, Shamil Hussain had also suffered a neck injury.

The team management is not impressed with the fitness of new players and has also expressed concern over their inability to handle pressure. Most young players seemed suited for 20-over matches and struggled in 50-over games.

## ODI rankings: Salman Ali Agha enters top 10, Abrar Ahmed slips



PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: The International Cricket Council (ICC) has released its latest ODI rankings, with Pakistan's all-rounder Salman Ali Agha making a strong move into the top ten, while Abrar Ahmed has slipped out of the elite bracket following a decline in his position. In the batting rankings, Babar Azam remains sixth. Meanwhile, Salman Ali Agha has climbed nine places to secure the ninth spot. Among other Pakistani batters, Mohammad Rizwan has dropped two places to 26th, while Fakhar Zaman has fallen four spots to 31st.

In the bowling rankings, Abrar Ahmed has slipped four places to 13th. However, Shaheen Shah Afridi and Haris Rauf have each moved up one place to 17th and 19th respectively.

In the all-rounders' category, Salman Ali Agha has also improved by three places to reach 10th position.

In the T20I rankings, Sahibzada Farhan holds the third position, while Babar Azam is ranked 36th and Salman Ali Agha 39th.

Abrar Ahmed, however, retains a strong third position in the T20I bowlers' rankings.

## Pakistan and India drawn together in Pool D for FIH Hockey World Cup 2026



PEAK POINT

LAHORE: The International Hockey Federation (FIH) on Tuesday unveiled the pool composition for the FIH Men's Hockey World Cup 2026, with arch-rivals Pakistan and India drawn together in

draw ceremony took place at the Wagener Stadium and was attended by FIH President Tayyab Ikram, FIH Vice President and Germany, France, and Malaysia. Meanwhile, Marcos Hofman, as well as head coaches, Australia, Ireland, and South Africa.

As per the tournament format, the two teams from the pool will progress to the second stage, where the eight qualifying sides will be divided into two groups of four. The top two teams from Pools A and D will form Pool E, while qualifiers from Pools B and C will be placed in Pool F.

## New Zealand thump South Africa in Hamilton to make series 1-1



PEAK POINT

HAMILTON: New Zealand produced a commanding all-round performance to defeat South Africa by 68 runs in the second T20 International at Seddon Park on Tuesday, leveling the five-match series at 1-1. Bouncing

made a steady start through Conway and Tom Latham, who stitched together a 48-run opening stand in their just over six overs. For Latham contributed 11 before falling to Keshav Maharaj, while the hosts slipped briefly to 55-2 after an early middle-order setback.

Conway anchored the innings with a well-crafted 60 off 49 balls, striking five boundaries and two sixes. He was well supported by Nick Kelly, who added a brisk 21 off 12 deliveries. Skipper Santner chipped in with 20, but it was the late surge from Cole McConchie

## Karachi Whites rout Sialkot to reach National T20 2026 Cup final



## CDA Ramazan Cup concludes with focus on emerging cricket talent

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: The Capital Development Authority (CDA) on Wednesday concluded its Talent Hunt Ramazan Cup 2026 at the National Cricket Ground in F-7, with G-10 Junoon Cricket Club and F-6 Mavericks winning the men's and women's titles, respectively.

The men's final saw G-10 Junoon Cricket Club defeat F-8 JJ Cricket Team, while F-6 Mavericks registered a six-wicket victory over F-10 United Cricket Team in the women's final.

Muneeb Maqbool was declared Player of the Tournament in the men's category, while Fajar Naveed received the award in the women's competition.

CDA Chairman and Chief Commissioner Islamabad Muhammad Ali Randhawa, who attended the closing ceremony as chief guest, dis-

tributed prizes among players and appreciated their performances.

A total of 10 teams participated in the men's tournament, including eight clubs from Islamabad and two teams — Chairman CDA XI

named best batter, Noor-ul-Ain best bowler and Mahwish best wicketkeeper.

More than Rs2 million in prize money was distributed among the winners and runners-up. The women's winning team received



and Minister XI — selected through open trials. In the women's category, six teams were formed following nationwide trials.

Individual awards in the men's category included Best Bowler (Osama Afridi), Best Batsman (Zeeshan Farid) and Best Wicketkeeper (Fahad Saleem). In the women's event, Maham Anis was

Rs600,000, while the runners-up were awarded Rs300,000. In the men's category, the winners received Rs300,000 and the runners-up Rs150,000.

Speaking on the occasion, Randhawa said the prize money for the women's competition had been increased to promote female participation in sports.



ISLAMABAD: Girls busy in selecting & purchasing bangles' from stall for Eid-ul-Fitr festival at Saddar.

## ICT rainfall: DC orders field monitoring, teams activated across city

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad reported light and heavy rain in different areas, prompting the district administration to take immediate steps. In this regard, Deputy Commissioner (DC) Islamabad, Irfan Memon directed all assistant commissioners to move into the field and review the situation in their respective areas. The instructions aim to ensure smooth management during the rainfall and to address any issues without delay.

According to the directive, assistant commissioners have been asked to closely monitor low-lying areas and water channels where accumulation is more



likely. Special focus has been placed on ensuring that water does not collect in residential zones or disrupt traffic flow.

The deputy commissioner also ordered sanitation teams to begin work on drainage without delay. These teams have been mobilized to clear water from roads and streets and to keep the drainage system functional during the rain.

## Rs13.6 Billion default scandal: CDA fails to recover mega lease payment from NUMS for 918 acre Medical City

NADEEM TANOLI

ISLAMABAD: A massive Rs13.6 billion financial default has surfaced at the Capital Development Authority, where the civic body failed to recover payment for a 918 acre prime land allotment to the National University of Medical Sciences, exposing serious lapses in financial oversight and enforcement of state contracts. The shocking default, flagged in surfaced during a Public Accounts

Committee session by the Auditor General's report, reveals that the CDA not only failed to recover the Rs13.6 billion lease premium, but also allowed over Rs131 million in annual ground rent to accumulate unpaid, raising questions about accountability in one of Islamabad's largest land deals. According to audit findings, the CDA allotted 7,344 kanals (918 acres) of land in Sector I-17 for the development of a Medical City under a long term lease arrangement spanning

33 years, extendable up to 99 years. Despite the scale and value of the project, the authority has been unable to enforce payment terms even after nearly five years. The audit revealed that not a single rupee of the core Rs13.6 billion premium was recovered within the expected timeframe, while ground rent liabilities continued to grow. The outstanding Rs131.072 million in Annual Ground Rent was calculated over several years based on the total land area, further com-

pounding the financial loss to the national exchequer. When confronted, CDA officials admitted that they had merely issued letters requesting payment, without initiating any strong legal or recovery action. Out of the total amount due, only Rs318 million has been recovered, a fraction of the total liability, highlighting weak enforcement mechanisms. The case has triggered strong reactions within oversight bodies, with both the Public Accounts

Committee and the Departmental Accounts Committee expressing serious concern over the prolonged inaction. Lawmakers questioned how such a high-value public asset could be handed over without securing payments, describing the situation as a major governance and financial management failure. Officials further admitted that the Annual Ground Rent has not even been formally demanded, as it is linked to the payment of the

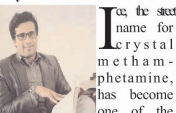
initial premium, effectively allowing liabilities to accumulate unchecked. The committees have now directed the CDA to submit a comprehensive recovery progress report within weeks, warning that continued delays could result in stricter accountability measures. The Principal Accounting Officer is expected to be called in to explain the authority's failure to recover billions in public funds.

# Opinion & Editorial


  
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## Saving our youth from the menace of ice addiction

By RJ Shah Nawaz Khan



**I**ce, the street name for crystal methamphetamine, has become one of the most dangerous threats facing our society today. In recent years its use has grown very quickly, especially among young people. This powerful drug is destroying the future of thousands of boys and girls. It is breaking families apart and creating serious problems in neighbourhoods and communities across the country. If we do not act soon and strongly, an entire generation could be lost to this poison. Many things push young people toward ice. Unemployment and constant money worries leave them feeling hopeless and without purpose. Heartbreak in love, deep sadness, mental stress and depression make some search for quick relief, and unfortunately they find it for a short time in drugs. Bad friends, lack of proper guidance from home, and wrong company pull them deeper into this habit. A large number of young people spend years studying day and night to pass tough exams like PMS or CSS. They dream of becoming doctors, engineers or government officers. When they fail again and again, or when they see no bright future ahead, the pain and disappointment become too heavy to bear. Without love, support and understanding from family or friends, some turn to ice to escape those feelings of failure. Sometimes families, without meaning to, play a part in the problem. When parents

give too much freedom without any rules, or pay little attention to what their children are doing, young people can easily fall into bad habits. On the other hand, when parents put extreme pressure for top marks and perfect results, or force choices that ignore the child's own wishes and talents, it creates unbearable tension inside. In such situations drugs sometimes become the only way they know to find relief. The damage done by ice is terrible and long-lasting. It harms the brain and body very badly. Addicted people often become angry and violent without warning. They lose control over their own actions. Most drop out of studies, cannot hold jobs, and lose respect in society. Families suffer deep emotional pain and spend huge amounts of money trying to save their loved ones. At the same time society sees more fights, theft, robbery and other crimes, making streets and communities less safe for everyone. To stop this growing danger the government must take firm steps. Strong laws are needed, along with strict action against anyone who brings ice into the country or sells it. Smugglers and dealers should face heavy punishment so that others fear to join this illegal business. Police must work hard to find and break the secret networks that supply the drug. When police and local people work together, they can spot suspicious activities early and protect young boys and girls before they get trapped. Free treatment centres should be opened by the government so that poor families can get help without paying large sums. These centres must

provide medicine, counselling and proper care to help addicted people recover and return to normal life. Awareness is very important. Schools, colleges and communities should hold regular programs, talks and workshops to teach young people exactly how harmful and destructive ice really is. Non-government organisations can help by running rehabilitation programs and by teaching useful skills so that recovered youth can find work and build a better future. The best way to keep young people away from drugs is to give them good and healthy things to do. Sports, quality education, skill training, technical courses and help to start small businesses can fill their time with purpose. Healthy fun, sports events, community gatherings and positive activities keep them busy and happy in the right way. Teachings of religion and good morals also play a big role. Islam teaches self-control, honesty, patience and responsibility toward family and society. When young people understand and follow these values, they are much stronger against bad influences. In the end, no single group can fight ice addiction alone. Families, schools, religious leaders, police, government, courts and NGOs must all join hands. With clear laws, quick police action, free treatment, awareness programs and real opportunities for our youth, we can protect them from this deadly drug. Together we can save our young people and build a healthier, safer and stronger Pakistan for the future.

## The harm-heal line

Muhammad Hamid Zaman

**I**n the late 1930s, a large lab in northern China, under Japanese occupation, was forging ahead with a new type of weapon. It was nicknamed Unit 731. Led by General Shiro Ishii, a microbiologist by training, the goal of the lab was not just to produce but also to test biological weapons on the Chinese population. Over the course of the lab's operation, plague-infested flea bags were dropped in Ningbo and Quzhou in Zhejiang province. Marshes, wells and waterways were poisoned with biological weapons, including anthrax. Estimates suggest that by the end of WWII, more than two hundred thousand Chinese civilians were killed through testing of biological weapons and subsequent epidemics of plague, cholera and anthrax. These numbers are similar to the deaths caused in Hiroshima and Nagasaki by the atomic bombs dropped by the US.

The development of biological weapons was not an accident. It was a deliberate, well-funded and organised effort by the Japanese Imperial army. The idea to use bacteria as a weapon was first articulated by a French chemist, Auguste Trillat, in the 1920s, but the European programme never really took off.

General Shiro, who visited Europe during the interwar years, was impressed by the new weapons technology of Europe and brought some of these ideas back to Japan, and was eventually able to convince the military and political leadership to invest in, develop, and test. During and after the war, the US and the UK developed major biological weapons programmes. The US programme continued for nearly three decades, during which it conducted extensive tests both in the US and in the Marshall Islands. The UK experiments done with Anthrax toxin on the Gruinard Island (near Scotland) in 1942 were so intense that the whole island was contaminated for four decades. Even an attempt to set the whole island on fire did not clean the environment.

Courtesy Tribune

## Fresh oil cargo arrives in Pakistan amid global volatility, more shipments lined up



PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has received a fresh crude oil cargo, with another vessel expected to arrive shortly, as authorities step up efforts to build fuel stocks and ensure supply stability amid volatile global energy markets and ongoing regional tensions.

The development was shared during a meeting of the Committee to Monitor Petrol Prices, which was held on Wednesday under the chairmanship of the Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb. The meeting

was attended by the Federal Minister for Petroleum Ali Pervaiz Malik, Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research Rana Tanveer Hussain, Governor State Bank of Pakistan, along with federal secretaries and senior officials from relevant ministries, divisions, and regulatory authorities. The committee undertook a detailed review of petroleum product stock positions and was briefed that, despite heightened volatility in international energy markets and evolving regional dynamics, domestic supply remains stable with adequate stocks available

across the country.

It was noted that diesel stocks currently provide approximately 24 days of cover, while petrol stocks remain at comfortable levels, supported by ongoing imports and refinery operations.

The Petroleum Division informed that one cargo of crude oil has arrived and is under discharge, while another vessel is expected to reach Karachi harbour within hours.

Additional shipments remain in transit, and further import arrangements for March and April are being actively managed to reinforce national reserves.

Members were apprised that refinery throughput is expected to improve as incoming cargoes are processed, with efforts underway to optimize production levels across facilities.

The committee was also briefed that global petroleum markets remain exceptionally tight, with recent increases observed in both benchmark prices and cargo premiums.

## Junaid Anwar Chaudhry calls KPT channel dredging a major boost to maritime infrastructure

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs, Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chaudhry said that dredging of the Karachi Port Trust (KPT) main channel by KGTL, which began on Wednesday, will mark a major upgrade to maritime infrastructure.

The minister in a statement highlighted that the work follows a formal agreement between KPT and KGTL to enhance navigational capacity and meet rising demands from international shipping. "This initiative underscores the government's commitment to modernizing port facilities and bolstering Pakistan's role in regional and global trade.

Upon completion within three months, the project will enable KPT to accommodate vessels up to 350 meters in length



with a gross registered tonnage (GRT) of 100,000," the minister stated.

"This will boost port efficiency by handling higher-capacity ships, reducing congestion, and shortening turnaround times," Junaid Chaudhry stated.

The dredging will deepen the upper and lower Harbour channels to 14 meters for safer navigation, while 14 berths will reach 15.5 meters to support larger ships and expand cargo-handling capabilities. The minister concluded that the project will drive higher trade volumes.

## Dar arrives in Riyadh for meeting of regional FMs

PEAK POINT

RIYADH: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar arrived in Riyadh on Wednesday for a meeting with the foreign ministers of regional countries, where he will advocate for a "swift end" to the conflict in the Middle East, according to the Foreign Office (FO).

The conflict began with US-Israeli strikes on Iran on February 28. In retaliatory strikes, Iran has targeted US assets and bases in Gulf countries. Amid the hostilities, the FO has termed Pakistan's role a "bridge builder".

In a statement, FO said Dar had arrived in Riyadh, where he is set to "participate in the Consultative Ministerial Meeting of Foreign Ministers from Arab and Islamic countries, hosted by Saudi Arabia".

Upon arrival, Dar was received by Pakistan's Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, Ahmed Farooq and representatives of the Saudi Arabian Foreign Ministry, FO said.

In a separate statement earlier in the day, the FO said that Dar was travelling to Riyadh at the invitation of Saudi Foreign Minister

Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud.

It said Dar would attend the meeting with foreign ministers of regional countries from March 18 to 19, during which he will "express complete support for the territorial integrity, sovereignty, and political independence of all brotherly countries in the region, and call for an end to all attacks on their territory".

According to the FO, Dar will reiterate "Pakistan's call for a swift end to the ongoing conflict" and call for a return to "dialogue and diplomacy".

The foreign minister is also expected to highlight Pakistan's diplomatic outreach efforts and its "desire to continue playing a pivotal role towards resolving the prevailing grave security crisis being faced by the region".

According to a Reuters report, Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan is also attending a meeting in Riyadh today to discuss regional developments.

This will mark the third visit from the Pakistani side to Saudi Arabia amid ongoing tensions in the Middle East.



Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar arrived in the Saudi Arabian capital Riyadh.

## President Zardari extends condolence over assassination of Dr Larjani

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD:

President Asif Ali Zardari, Wednesday, expressed profound grief over the assassination of senior Iranian leader Dr Ali Ardeshtir Larjani amid ongoing Israeli attacks on Iran and extended his earnest condolences to the Government and people of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The president observed that the ongoing escalation was resulting in human and infrastructure damages, causing serious economic repercussions and instability across the region, President Secretariat Media Wing said in a press release.

He recalled Dr Ali Ardeshtir Larjani's official visit to Pakistan in November last year, when they discussed ways to deepen bilateral cooperation across multiple domains, and noted Dr Larjani's contribution to strengthen the positive momentum in Pakistan-Iran relations. The President called for immediate restraint and cessation of hostilities, urging all parties to prioritise dialogue and diplomacy.

## Kundi, PEMRA chief discuss media role, okays revival of DI Khan office

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Chairperson Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA), Ambreen Jan, called on Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi at the Governor House here on Wednesday.

During the meeting, matters of mutual interest, the role of media, and the prevailing national situation were discussed in detail. The Governor appreciated the role of PEMRA and lauded the institution's performance.

Faisal Karim Kundi said that in the current circumstances, the responsibilities of PEMRA had further increased, adding that the authority's proactive role was vital for promoting responsible journalism. He emphasized that



the media must ensure the dissemination of accurate and timely information to positively guide society. The meeting also discussed the early restoration of the PEMRA office established in Dera Ismail Khan in 2008. Both sides agreed that reviving the office would help improve media regulation and facilitate better services at the local level.

On the occasion, the PEMRA chairperson briefed the Governor on ongoing initiatives of the authority.

## Wani calls for International Commission of Inquiry into crimes against humanity in IIOJK

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of the Kashmir Institute of International Relations, Altaf Hussain Wani, has called for the establishment of an International Commission of Inquiry to investigate crimes against humanity in Indian occupied Kashmir (IOK).

He made these assertions while addressing the 61st session of the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) during the Item 4 General Debate, where he represented the World Muslim Congress, received a press release here on Wednesday.

Referring to the genesis of the Kashmir dispute, Wani said it was deeply unfortunate that binding



United Nations resolutions recognizing Kashmir as a disputed territory have been ignored for more than seven decades. "The right to the final disposition of Kashmir has been taken away from Kashmiris by force," he said, adding that what he described as a systematic machinery of terror continues to operate with metronomic precision. Highlighting what he termed systematic

## ADB to provide \$10bn in financing to Pakistan under new 5-year strategy

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: The Asian Development Bank (ADB) is expected to extend about \$10 billion in financing to Pakistan over the next five years under its 2026-30 Country Partnership Strategy (CPS2026-30) launched on Wednesday.

The CPS sets out "a roadmap to support the country's transition to sustainable and inclusive growth through private sector-led development", the Manila-based lending agency said.

"The five-year strategy will focus on three pathways: enabling private sec-

tor development, advancing inclusion and empowerment, and enhancing resilience and sustainability", it said, adding these priorities will be reinforced by crosscutting themes of good governance and institutional strengthening, gender equality and social inclusion, digital transformation, and regional cooperation and integration.

"The new CPS is tailored to address Pakistan's structural challenges and promote robust and lasting growth, which benefits the whole country, especially the poor and vulnerable," said ADB Country Director



for Pakistan Emma Fan. "It promotes strategic investments and reforms across key sectors to stimulate economic growth and create jobs. ADB looks forward to supporting Pakistan's public and private sectors in

delivering on this ambitious agenda," she said.

The CPS noted that Pakistan had stabilised its macroeconomic conditions following a series of external shocks and had initiated important structural

reforms.

"The CPS responds to this evolving country context by emphasising export- and investment-led growth, supported by improved public financial management, an enabling business environment, and investments in high-impact sectors".

Private sector development is a central feature of the strategy. Under the CPS, ADB will support reforms and investments to reduce regulatory and compliance burdens, improve infrastructure, expand access to finance, promote public-private partnerships, and boost private sector opera-

tions.

The CPS also identifies transformative opportunities in critical minerals, railways and multimodal connectivity, energy security and clean energy, agricultural productivity and value chains, integrated water resource management, and skills development and employment.

The ADB, which remains one of the top two multilateral lending agencies to Pakistan, said it will increasingly deploy integrated solutions, combining policy reforms, sovereign and non-sovereign financing.