



Empowering women not an act of charity, it is an investment in national prosperity: Misbah Khar



Security forces foil infiltration attempts in Balochistan, KP: Dr. Tariq Fazal



Karachi-Rohri rail track up gradation likely to start by July: Abbasi

Founded By:
(Late) Rehmat Khan

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

Executive Group Editor
Arif Mehmood Khan



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Number of individuals benefiting from digital banking surpasses 127mn: PM told

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: A meeting with Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, Tuesday, was appraised that the number of individuals benefiting from digital banking in the country exceeded to 127 million. The prime minister commended the economic team and the State Bank of Pakistan for shifting salaries, pensions and vendor payments by the federal and provincial governments to the 'Raast' digital payment system. The prime minister chaired a review meeting on promotion of cashless economy in the country. During the meeting, it was appraised that during the period from July 2025 to January 2026, payments amounting to worth Rs 1.6 trillion were made through Raast by the federal and provincial governments. The prime

minister appreciated the ministry of finance team for the achievement. The meeting was attended by Ministers Muhammad Aurangzeb, Ahad Khan Cheema, Attaullah Tarar, Shaza Fatima Khawaja, Ali Pervaiz Malik, Minister of State Bilal Azhar Kayani, Governor State Bank Jameel Ahmad, provincial chief secretaries and other senior officials, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release. The prime minister also appreciated Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) team for provision of financial assistance to 71 percent of eligible beneficiaries so far under the PM's Ramazan Relief Package.

The meeting was further informed that in last year, 24 percent of beneficiaries had received the amount by the 12th day.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister chaired a review meeting on promotion of cashless economy in the country.

464 Afghan combatants killed, 188 check posts destroyed in operation Ghazab lil-Haq: Atta Tarar



PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar on Tuesday said that the security forces have killed 464 combatants of the Afghan Taliban regime, destroyed their 188 posts, and captured 31 others during Operation Ghazab lil-Haq, launched following "unprovoked action" from across the border.

Providing a summary of Afghan Taliban regime's losses at 16:00 hours, the minister said that over 665 Afghan operatives were injured during Operation Ghazab lil-Haq (Righteous Fury).

Around 192 tanks, armoured vehicles, and artillery guns have also been destroyed during the operation.

War on Iran aims to extend Israeli influence to Pakistan's borders: Khawaja Asif

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's Defence Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif has stated that the objective behind the war against Iran is to bring Israeli influence closer to Pakistan's borders, alleging that the conflict was imposed on Iran despite its willingness to agree to a deal.

In a post on the social media platform X, the defence minister wrote that Zionism poses a threat to humanity.

He said that since the establishment of Israel on Palestinian land, every major crisis and war imposed on the Islamic world has, directly or indirectly, reflected Zionist ideolo-

gy and state influence. He further claimed



that Zionism has dominated the global economic system for over a century and that major powers remain hostage to it. Referring to Pakistan, he said the country is a nuclear power and its armed forces are respected worldwide by the grace and help of Allah. He paid tribute to the country's martyrs and veterans, stating that their

sacrifices have safeguarded national sovereignty. He also prayed for those who played a role in making Pakistan a nuclear power and saluted Nawaz Sharif for his courage in conducting nuclear tests. Khawaja Asif reiterated that despite Iran's consent to an agreement, war was imposed on it as part of a Zionist-designed agenda, which he alleged also includes extending

Israel's influence up to Pakistan's borders. He further asserted that Afghanistan, Iran, and India share a common agenda rooted in hostility toward Pakistan, aiming to render its borders insecure, encircle the country with adversaries, and reduce it to a dependent state.

He emphasized that 250 million Pakistanis, regardless of their school of thought, must understand this alleged conspiracy and the intentions of what he described as eternal enemies, despite internal differences.

The defence minister concluded by praying for unity within the Muslim world, for the ability to recognize adversaries, for the freedom of Palestine,

US Marines fired on protesters storming consulate in Karachi, US officials say

PEAK POINT

WASHINGTON: United States Marines opened fire on demonstrators during the storming of the Karachi consulate over the weekend, two US officials said on Monday — a rare use of force at a diplomatic post that could sharply escalate tensions in the country amid widespread protests over the assassination of Iran's leader. On Sunday, 11 people were killed when protesters breached the compound's outer wall after Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei was assassinated in strikes on Iran. Citing initial information, the two US officials.

The defence minister concluded by praying for unity within the Muslim world, for the ability to recognize adversaries, for the freedom of Palestine,

PAA says Pakistan's airspace remains 'completely available' for civil aviation traffic

PEAK POINT

RAWALPINDI: The Pakistan Airports Authority (PAA) said on Tuesday that the country's airspace remained "fully open, safe, and completely available for all civil aviation traffic". The clarification came after the authority issued a notice to air-traffic controllers (Notam) regarding specific air routes in Karachi and Lahore regions, saying they would remain unavailable from March 3 to March 31 between 9am and 3pm daily. The Notam said "selected ATS (air traffic service) routes segments" in the Karachi.

Hundreds dead in Iran and dozens in Lebanon along with 11 in Israel

PEAK POINT

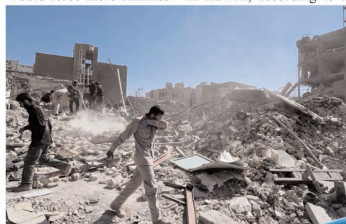
IRAN: The Iranian Red Crescent Society said on Tuesday the US-Israeli operation has killed at least 787 people.

The society provided no information regarding the number of the injured in a statement quoted by semi-official Tasnim news agency. Search and rescue operations are ongoing in the rubble of the bombed buildings, it added.

In Israel, where several locations were hit by Iranian missiles, 11 people were killed. The news agency reported airstrikes killed 13 Iranian troops in Kerman, 800 kilometers (500 miles) southeast of Iran's capital, Tehran.

Israel's retaliatory strikes against Hezbollah killed 52 people in Lebanon.

"Military escalation would force more families soldiers in a logistics unit in Kuwait, according to a



from their homes and hit civilians hard," said Amy Pope, director general of the International Organisation on Migration, calling for the international community to press for de-escalation. "Millions are already displaced in the region."

The US military has confirmed six deaths of American service members. All six were Army

US official who was not authorized to comment publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity. Three people were killed in the United Arab Emirates, and one each in Kuwait and Bahrain.

The chaos of the conflict became apparent when the US military said Kuwait had "mistakenly shot down" three American fighter jets while Iran was

attacking it with aircraft, ballistic missiles and drones. US Central Command said all six pilots ejected safely.

Nuclear facilities and missile infrastructure targeted Iranian state TV said strikes caused two explosions early Tuesday at a broadcasting facility in Tehran, but said no one was injured.

Reza Najafi, Iran's ambassador to the International Atomic Energy Agency, told reporters that airstrikes targeted the Natanz nuclear enrichment site on Sunday.

"Their justification that Iran wants to develop nuclear weapons is simply a big lie," he said.

Israel and the US have not acknowledged strikes at the site, which the US bombed in the 12-day war between Iran.

Indian media aflutter after 'airplane shaped balloon' spotted in occupied Kashmir



PEAK POINT

NEW DEHLI: A balloon in the shape of an airplane has caused a stir in Indian media. According to several media outlets, the balloon has been taken into police custody.

Indian news agency ANI posted on X that an "aircraft-shaped balloon" with "PIA" written on it was found in Rajouri in occupied Kashmir.

"The police team took the object into possession. No electrical or electronic components were found affixed," the post said, citing police.

The images shared with the post showed a deflated balloon in the shape of a plane and with the words PIA on the sides, ostensibly a reference to Pakistan International Airlines.



SPORTS



Sialkot Stallionz officially change name to Multan Sultans under new management

Pakistan likely to make key changes in ODI squad for Bangladesh series



PEAK POINT

LAHORE: Pakistan's national cricket team is likely to witness major changes ahead of upcoming three-match ODI series against Bangladesh.

Reports suggested that key senior players are likely to be excluded from the squad. The decision to make these changes comes as the team looks toward their future preparations, specifically focusing on the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup and the 2028 T20 World Cup. The team management and selectors are in favor of giving opportunities to younger players in order to build a more robust and sustainable lineup for upcoming international events.

As part of this shake-up, Babar Azam, Saim Ayub, and Mohammad Nawaz may be left out of the squad. The focus is on bringing fresh talent into the fold and laying down a strategic long-term plan for the team's success.

The three-match ODI series against Bangladesh is scheduled for March 11, 13, and 15, 2026, at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Dhaka. Pakistan's team is expected to arrive in Bangladesh on March 9, though the tense regional situation could potentially affect the tour's schedule.

PEAK POINT
ISLAMABAD: The Sialkot Stallionz have officially changed their name to the Multan Sultans, Pakistan Super League (PSL) CEO Salman Naseer announced on Tuesday.

In a press conference, Naseer said that the group's name change request, put forward by the team's new CEO, Gohar Shah, had been officially accepted.

According to him, the name change request was Shah's first act

as CEO of the franchise, as provided. "At the time, I think Multan was not available, so he chose Sialkot," Naseer said, adding that as soon as Shah came in as CEO of the franchise, he had applied for a name change, discussing the terms and conditions as well as the one-time licence fee required.

Additionally, Naseer announced that the per annum franchise fees for the team had been increased from Rs1.85bn to Rs2bn.

Gohar Shah, who was also pre-

sented at the press conference and invited to speak, expressed his happiness that "south Punjab's representation is back in the league".

"We were wondering: how will a stallion defeat the HBL PSL alone?" he quipped. "A stallion needs a sultan."

OZ Developers put forward a massive Rs1.85bn bid to win Sialkot at the PSL auction in January, the highest ever bid for a PSL franchise.

Emirates ICC elite panel of match officials named for ICC T20 CWC semis



PEAK POINT

DUBAI: Richard Illingworth and Alex Wharf will be the on-field umpires for the first ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026 semi-final between South Africa and New Zealand on Wednesday.

Illingworth was in the middle for South Africa's victory at this stage two years ago, when the Proteas d i s m i s s e d

The second semi-final between India and England, in Mumbai, will be overseen by on-field umpires Chris Gaffaney and Allahuddin Paleker.

The two nations met at the same stage in 2024, a match India won by 68 runs, with Gaffaney also in place for that one. In this competition so far, he has been in the middle for India's matches against South Africa and the West Indies.

Paleker has taken control of two England matches, against the West Indies and Scotland, as well as India's victory over the Netherlands. Adrian Holdstock will be the third umpire in Mumbai, Pycroft.

Lions tour, England Women's training camp in UAE cancelled over security situation



South Africa, India eye T20 World Cup rematch as semi-finals begin

PEAK POINT

KOLKATA: Unbeaten South Africa continue their quest for a maiden World Cup title in the first semi-final of the T20 World Cup against New Zealand in Kolkata on Wednesday, with a potential repeat of the 2024 final against India awaiting.

Should Aiden Markram's side inflict their second defeat of the tournament on New Zealand — they beat them comfortably in the group stage — then a rematch against India for the trophy could be on the cards.

Suryakumar Yadav's defending champions will first have to get past Harry Brook's England in Mumbai on Thursday — a blockbuster clash that is being talked about excitedly across the cricket-mad city.

But South Africa are unbeaten and are a team on the up after decades of gaining a reputation for "chok-

ing" on the big stage.

They finally won their first global cricket trophy when they lifted the World Test Championship last year, and eight members of that side are in the T20 World Cup squad. South Africa

South Africa had one hand on the trophy with 26 needed from the last four overs with six wickets in hand.

But a dramatic mini-collapse saw them finish on 169-8 as India won by seven runs.



Markram has led from the front, scoring 86 not out in a seven-wicket romp past semi-final opponents New Zealand in the group phase, easily chasing 176 with 17 balls to spare.

Chasing 177 in Barbados,

ITF Wheelchair Tennis World Team Cup Qualification event begins in Colombo





IRS convenes Pre-COP 31 dialogue on Pakistan's Climate Agenda

PEAK POINT
ISLAMABAD: The Institute of Regional Studies (IRS) convened an Eminent Talk with Senator Zargha Suharwardy Taimur as an inaugural Pre-COP31 dialogue on "Strengthening Climate Governance in Pakistan." The event brought together policymakers, researchers, and practitioners to deliberate on institutional reforms, legislative priorities, and implementation gaps within the country's climate governance framework. In his

opening remarks, Amb Jauhar Saleem, President IRS, noted that global temperatures are now as warm as at any point in the last 125,000 years, underscoring the unprecedented scale of current warming. He cautioned that if this trajectory continues, severe risks to ecosystems, food security, and global stability will become inevitable. Delivering the address, Dr. Zargha reflected on Pakistan's fragmented policy landscape, observing that contradictory decisions often undermine



progress in long-term carbon markets and climate adaptation initiatives. She highlighted that although Pakistan actively participates in international climate negotiations and receives climate finance, structural weaknesses and limited empowerment of local governments contin-

ue to hinder effective implementation at the grassroots level. Dr. Zargha emphasized that meaningful climate justice cannot be achieved without robust district-level governance. Drawing on recent flood experiences, she underscored the consequences of unregulated urban expansion along riverbeds and its disproportionate impact on vulnerable communities, particularly women and persons with disabilities. She also stressed the urgency of rethinking agricultural and water-use practices in an

increasingly water-stressed country. Mr. Talha Tufail Bhatti, Lead, Climate Governance & Policy Program at IRS, remarked that at a time of political polarization and declining trust in institutions, climate governance must transcend electoral cycles and short-term policy horizons. A shift in mindset from unintended environmental degradation to intentional planetary stewardship is essential to ensuring sustainable and equitable climate action.

"Submit Full Written Evidence in 10 Days": NAVTTC asked to produce records before Senate Panel

NADEEM TANOLI

ISLAMABAD: Facing heightened parliamentary pressure, officials of the National Vocational and Technical Training Commission (NAVTTC) have been directed to submit detailed written replies supported by documentary evidence within ten days, as the Senate Sub Committee escalated its review of governance, financial management, and program performance in the technical and vocational education sector. The Sub Committee of the Senate Standing Committee on Federal Education and Professional Training continued its proceedings under the chairmanship of Senator Kamran Murtaza. Senator Rana Mahmood ul Hassan, who moved the agenda, presented a six point questionnaire seeking clarifications from the Ministry of Federal

Education and Professional Training and NAVTTC on key operational and performance matters. During the session, NAVTTC officials informed the Committee that the complainant referenced in the matter had not responded to repeated attempts to establish contact through official calls and email correspondence. The Committee took note of the explanation but proceeded with further scrutiny of the institution's submissions. After deliberations, the presiding officer issued clear directions to the Ministry and NAVTTC to provide comprehensive written responses within ten days, along with all supporting records, for in depth examination in the next sitting. The Committee signaled that verbal briefings would not suffice and that documented accountability would be central to

the review process. Officials also submitted previously requisitioned data during the meeting. Members indicated that the material would undergo detailed evaluation in upcoming proceedings as part of the Sub Committee's oversight mandate. Reaffirming the Committee's commitment to transparency and institutional reform, Senator Kamran Murtaza emphasized that parliamentary oversight is essential to ensure efficiency, accountability, and equitable delivery of vocational and technical training programs across the country. The matter has been deferred to the next sitting, with strict instructions for timely compliance and submission of complete documentation, as lawmakers continue to examine NAVTTC's performance and administrative conduct.

FUUAUAST holds orientation session for new students

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Urdu University of Arts, Science and Technology (FUUAUAST), Islamabad campus, on Tuesday organized a comprehensive orientation session to welcome newly admitted students for the upcoming academic session. Hundreds of fresh students, carrying dreams of a bright future, participated in the event. Welcome stalls were set up to receive students stepping onto the university campus for the first time. In addition to departmental introductory sessions, a central orientation ceremony was held at the university auditorium. Vice Chancellor, Dr. Zabta Khan Shinwari, warmly welcomed the new students and described them as the most valued segment of the university community.

Opinion & Editorial

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ISLAMABAD
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

A capable state

Dr Niaz Murtaza
FOR right-wingers, the best state is one that shrinks its role in economic matters to a minimum — even in those areas that may indirectly affect them, for example, environment and social policy. Such neoliberal views dominate economic policy and debates globally. In Pakistan, their hold on actual policy is limited. Policy is always led by those who follow predatory crony capitalism. But the shrillest critique of such policies comes from IMF-type neoliberals.

States that have progressed in modern history displayed neither predatory nor neoliberal traits. In predatory states, officials adopt policies that provide largesse to their crony capitalists in return for kickbacks. State policies inhibit long-term equitable progress. Such states can't even achieve the two most basic goals of progress: economic stability and durable growth. They largely benefit predatory elites.

The neoliberal state is a different beast. The state largely follows on delivering macroeconomic stability, rule of law and security while leaving economic development largely to the private sector. Predatory crony ties are replaced by policies that achieve stability and growth but ignore the other two key goals of progress — equity and sustainability. So, even stable economic growth unfairly

benefits the rich.

But neither today's advanced neoliberal Western states nor the relatively successful Asian states followed neoliberalism in their early stages of development as their private sectors then were not strong enough to ensure economic progress on their own. The state usually provided an overall intelligent design for economic progress and helped the private sector enter higher-end economic sectors via sound policies that provided technological knowhow, global market information, preferential loans, etc. but only to dynamic firms that delivered growth. They also helped ensure a fair share of economic growth to all sections of society. History clearly shows that hardly any country has progressed that didn't have a capable state which went beyond bookish neoliberal prescriptions to play such roles.

The neoliberal mantra of states shrinking their size is wrong.

So, until we can have such a capable state, we can forget about progress and even peace. The million-dollar question is how to craft such a state. For conservatives, the answer lies in mindless formulas such as the establishment imposing a technocratic set-up (which presumably includes those giving such ideas). But there is not even one case of a successful technocratic state globally.

China continue to do so too.

While neoliberals abhor state enterprises, the reality is that almost every state globally, except perhaps the Vatican, has them in strategic areas that serve critical national goals or where the private sectors can't perform due to minimum firm size requirements. Of course, such units must be managed well to not incur needless losses, as ours do. But even with our units, buried below the headlines of their huge overall losses are more nuanced details. Around 35 per cent of our state units do make a profit regularly. Among the loss-making ones, a few account for the bulk of the losses, such as PIA, Pakistan Steel Mills and electricity distribution companies. Even the latter don't incur losses due only to poor management and political interference — there are also the overall problems of our power sector linked to bad state policies such as poorly negotiated IPP contracts and line losses.

So, until we can have such a capable state, we can forget about progress and even peace. The million-dollar question is how to craft such a state. For conservatives, the answer lies in mindless formulas such as the establishment imposing a technocratic set-up (which presumably includes those giving such ideas). But there is not even one case of a successful technocratic state globally.

Courtesy Dawn

The long shadow of conflict

Muhammad Hamid Zaman

REGARDLESS of one's political viewpoint, we can agree that armed conflicts lead to the loss of innocent lives. That person may be a concert goer in the desert, a worker at an airport in a foreign land, a child buried under the rubble in an elementary school or someone whose dwelling happens to be near the border. Perhaps some may dismiss these incidents as inevitable outcomes of modern war, but that line of thinking takes away from our collective humanity. We tend to dismiss this 'collateral' loss of life because we do not think of the victims as our own. We think of these people as mere numbers or faceless statistics. But they are people with families, loved ones, aspirations, a past, present and a future. Perhaps another way to think about them is to imagine them as our relatives, friends or loved ones — because after all, they are someone's relative, friend, or loved one. What if that someone was us? The impact on the innocent goes beyond the present. For many caught up in the conflict, the physical and psychological wounds are real and permanent. But we now know that some of the actual wounds also affect future generations. Modern conflicts lead to not just loss of life in the current moment, but also affect the health of generations born long after the guns go silent. The nature of weapons used in modern wars is such that it affects land, waterways and the environment and allows for the development and proliferation of pathogens that quickly become drug-resistant and fail to respond to front-line antibiotics. As a result, a manageable infection becomes deadly, and a routine surgical procedure can be a death sentence. Research within the last decade from Lebanon, Iraq, Syria, Ukraine, Sudan, Yemen and Afghanistan, among other countries, has shown that the presence of heavy metals in the weapons of war leads to mutations in pathogenic bacteria that allow for the development of drug-resistant infections, making existing drugs impotent, and affecting not just those who are caught in conflict, but those in surrounding areas as well.

Courtesy Tribune

Water concerns

RECENT reports that India plans to invest \$600 million in increasing its water storage capacity on the Jhelum and Chenab rivers confirm official concerns that New Delhi is weaponising the shared resource against Pakistan. The increase in storage capacity from roughly 15 days to nearly two months will expand India's holding ability on the rivers allocated to Pakistan under the Indus Waters Treaty, giving it unprecedented leverage over downstream flows. In an agrarian economy like ours, where sowing cycles rely on predictable river discharge, even brief interruptions can cause lasting damage. A 55- to 60-day window to regulate flows could enable India to create artificial scarcity during critical crop cycles, especially during the low-flow winter months. The reverse scenario is as alarming. During monsoon surges, large upstream storage gives India the capacity to release accumulated water in concentrated volumes, flooding downstream regions. Although the IWT has survived wars and diplomatic ruptures since it was signed in 1960, India's decision to place it "in abeyance", followed by a series of contentious steps, has unsettled a framework long valued for its predictability and stability. Against this backdrop, the recent directive by the Court of Arbitration instructing India to share specific project-related data for the dams it is building on Pakistani rivers has significance beyond procedural compliance.

FM Dar expresses concern at 'sudden' US-Israel attack on Iran despite 'positive direction' in talks



PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar on Tuesday expressed concern at the "sudden" US-Israel coordinated attack on Iran, despite "positive direction" observed in talks between Washington and Tehran. The minister made the remarks while addressing the Senate. In his speech, he recalled that the process of talks between the US and Iran "going successfully". He also highlighted Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's visit to Austria,

where he held a meeting with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) chief, who Dar said was "optimistic that dialogue was heading in a positive direction". The foreign minister also recalled his conversation with the foreign minister of Oman last night, where he was told that the last round of talks between the US and Iran had ended "on a positive note". "He told me that after the talks, the Omani foreign minister flew to Washington, where he met the vice president and told him that the dialogue was going in a positive direction," Dar said. Expressing concern at the "sudden" attack in light of the above-mentioned developments, he said, "It was a repeat of what happened in June last year," referring to the 12-day war between Israel and Iran in June. FM Dar recalled that last year in June, he, along with Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, was in Istanbul at the meeting of a multilateral forum. "Tensions were

building up, and I remember Field Marshal Asim Munir sahib was on his way from the US to Pakistan and Araghchi suggested that I should ask the field marshal to come to Istanbul," he said.

"So on June 12, the field marshal and I had a meeting with Araghchi, where we tried to convince him to resolve things through diplomacy and dialogue," he said. The foreign minister also recalled his August 2025 meeting with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, where Dar said he had taken up the issue of Iran. "I received a positive response," he said, adding that Pakistan, on its part had tried to ensure that the issue was resolved.

He said Pakistan objected to the US demand of no enrichment, arguing that "peaceful use of nuclear energy was a legitimate right".

He recalled that it was agreed that "there should be surveillance of two to three countries, and Iran was happy with that".

PMYP, UN Women Pakistan align to expand young female's economic, digital footprint

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of the Prime Minister's Youth Programme, Rana Mashhood Ahmad Khan met Deputy Country Representative of UN Women Pakistan, Ms Fahmida Iqbal at the Prime Minister's Office to discuss collaboration aimed at advancing young women's economic, digital and leadership empowerment.

The meeting underscored a shared understanding that young women must be placed at the centre of Pakistan's demographic dividend and inclusive growth agenda. Both sides noted the alignment between PMYP's 4Es framework education, employment, engagement and environment and UN Women's mandate to promote gender equality and women's empowerment.

Outlining policy direction, the PMYP chairman said programme interventions were anchored in the National Youth Employment Policy, which focuses on school to work transition, skills develop-

ment, entrepreneurship and inclusive labour markets.

He also shared progress on the National Adolescents and Youth Policy, which prioritises digital inclusion, prevention of gender based violence, safer online spaces, child marriage prevention and youth health and wellbeing.

Women's economic participation was highlighted as a national priority. Officials noted that the female labour force participation rate stands at 21.5 per cent, with a national target of increasing it to 35 per cent by 2030.

Under the PM Youth Business and Agriculture Loan Scheme, a 25 per cent quota has been reserved for women. The need to enhance uptake through gender responsive financial literacy, enterprise readiness, mentorship and innovative financing models was also discussed.

PMYP, UN Women Pakistan align to expand young female's economic.



ISLAMABAD: Chairman of the Prime Minister's Youth Programme, Rana Mashhood Ahmad Khan talking to Deputy Country Representative of UN Women Pakistan, Ms Fahmida Iqbal at the Prime Minister's Office.

PTA Tells Senate: Revenues Top Rs 1 Trillion, 1 Million+ Harmful URLs Blocked

NADEEM TANOLLI

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) came under scrutiny during a Senate question and answer session, where the government laid out sweeping claims of record telecom growth, aggressive content blocking, child online protection measures, and plans for a nationwide 5G rollout. Senators pressed for clarity on

service quality, rural connectivity gaps, enforcement penalties, and the regulator's performance, as the sector reported over Rs 1 trillion in revenues and nearly 198 million mobile subscribers. During the session, the Minister Incharge of the Cabinet Division outlined PTA's statutory mandate, describing it as the principal telecom regulator responsible for licensing, spectrum

allocation, competition oversight, consumer protection, dispute resolution, revenue sharing regulation, and enforcement of Universal Service Fund obligations. The Authority was also described as the key body ensuring modernization of telecom infrastructure and protecting user rights while regulating market competition. The Senate was informed that under PTA's regulatory framework,

Pakistan's telecom sector recorded significant expansion over the last three years. Broadband penetration reportedly increased from 53.6 per cent to 60.6 per cent, while broadband subscribers surged to 150 million. The number of 4G subscribers jumped from 111.9 million to 141.4 million, reflecting a major shift toward data driven connectivity.

Empowering women not an act of charity, it is an investment in national prosperity: Misbah Khar

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of the Inter-Parliamentary Speakers Conference and Advisor to the Chairman Senate Misbah Khar Tuesday said that International Women's Day is not merely a celebration, but a reminder of the collective responsibility to create equitable opportunities for women across all sectors of society. Addressing the International Women's Day celebration held at Millennium Universal International College (MUIIC) she highlighted the indispensable role of women in Pakistan's history, progress, and future development. Khar extended her gratitude to the organizers, distinguished guests, faculty members, and students for hosting a meaningful event dedicated to recognizing women's achieve-

ments and advancing the cause of gender equity and inclusive leadership. Reflecting on Pakistan's struggle for independence and national development, she paid tribute to Fatima Jinnah, the Mother of the Nation, for mobilizing women during the freedom movement alongside Muhammad Ali Jinnah. She also acknowledged the pioneering efforts of Rana Liaquat Ali Khan in promoting women's social and political empowerment. She made special reference to Benazir Bhutto, the first Muslim woman Prime Minister of Pakistan and the Muslim world, describing her as a symbol of courage, resilience, and visionary leadership who shattered barriers and inspired generations of women to aspire to positions of national and global leadership.

Security forces foil infiltration attempts in Balochistan, KP: Dr. Tariq Fazal

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Dr. Tariq Fazal Chaudhary on Tuesday said Pakistan's security forces had successfully thwarted infiltration attempts by terrorists in parts of northern Balochistan, reaffirming that the country's borders remain secure.

In a statement posted on X, he said enemy elements attempted to infiltrate and launch ground attacks in the districts of Qilla Saifullah, Nuski, and Chaman. He added that security forces responded promptly and foiled the attempts.

The minister said dozens of terrorists were killed in the retal-



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Dr. Tariq Fazal Chaudhary on Tuesday said Pakistan's security forces had successfully thwarted infiltration attempts by terrorists in parts of northern Balochistan, reaffirming that the country's borders remain secure.

atory action, while several others were injured and forced to flee.

He further said that another terrorist attempt in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was also foiled, with a large number of militants eliminated during the operation.

"These operations are clear evidence that our armed forces remain vigilant, professional, and fully prepared at all times."

Operation against illegally residing Afghan nationals is ongoing in District Bannu

ABDUS SALAM BAITAB

BANNU: An operation against illegally residing Afghan nationals is ongoing in District Bannu. A total of 149 Afghan nationals and 35 facilitators have been arrested. A comprehensive and organized operation against illegally residing Afghan nationals is continuously underway in District Bannu. Large-scale actions are being carried out within the jurisdictions of various police stations. In light of the clear directives of District Police Officer (DPO) Bannu, Yasir Afridi, and under the direct supervision of SDPOs, an effective operation has been conducted against illegally residing foreign nationals. Despite repeated warning announcements by the Government of Pakistan, individuals residing illegally did not take voluntary repatriation seriously. Considering the current

national security situation, where illegally residing Afghan nationals have become a security risk, the scope of the operation at the district level has been further expanded down to the grassroots level to ensure law and order. During the operation, 149 Afghan nationals were taken into custody, cases were registered against them under the Foreign Act, and formal investigations have been initiated. Meanwhile, legal action has also been started against 35 facilitators, including landlords and shop owners, with cases registered under Section 10 RBO. Illegally residing Afghan citizens have been clearly informed that their current status has become unlawful; therefore, they are advised to return to their homeland respectfully as soon as possible, which would be in their best interest.

Sharing passenger revenue figures, he said the department earned Rs 30 billion in 2020-21.

PILDAT reviews the legislative performance and effectiveness of the 16th National Assembly

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: PILDAT reviews the legislative performance and effectiveness of the 16th National Assembly during its second year, PILDAT has noted that while the Assembly recorded the highest legislative output among recent assemblies, it continued to demonstrate structural weaknesses in attendance, agenda management, executive

engagement, and deliberative scrutiny. The heightened pace of legislation, particularly on constitutional matters, often unfolded within compressed timeframes, limiting the opportunity for sustained parliamentary debate and committee review. The second parliamentary year of the 16th National Assembly spanned from March 1, 2025 to February 28, 2026.

During this period, the Assembly was convened for 84 sittings, compared to 93 sittings in its first year, reflecting a decline of 9.7%. However, total working hours increased to 231 hours, up from 212 hours in the first year, indicating longer sittings despite fewer working days. The total annual budget of the National Assembly stood at PKR 16,290 million during the

second year. The average budget per sitting rose significantly to PKR 193.93 million, compared to PKR 136.96 million in the first year. Legislative productivity intensified during the second year, with the passage of 59 bills, compared to 47 bills in the first year — a 25.5% increase. Compared to the second year of the 12th to 15th National Assemblies.