



**Pakistan, Rwanda agree to enhance bilateral cooperation**



**Minister Aurangzeb advances economic diplomacy**



**OICCI urges Minister Kayani to expand tax net, not burden**

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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## Trump says US representatives heading to Islamabad, will be 'there tomorrow evening for negotiations' with Iran

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad appeared all set on Sunday to host a second round of talks between the US and Iran, with President Donald Trump announcing that representatives from Washington were heading to Islamabad and they would be "there tomorrow evening for negotiations". The US president made the announcement in a Truth Social post, where he also insisted that Washington was offering Tehran "a very fair and reasonable" deal. "And I hope they take it because, if they don't, the United States is going to knock out every single Power Plant, and every single Bridge, in Iran," he warned. "NO MORE MR. NICE GUY! They'll come down fast, they'll come down easy and, if

they don't take the DEAL, it will be my Honour to do what has to be done, which should have been done to Iran, by other Presidents, for the last 47 years. IT'S TIME FOR THE IRAN KILLING MACHINE TO END!" US media outlets reported, citing the White House spokesperson and officials, that Vice President JD Vance would lead the American delegation, and that Trump's envoy Steve Kushner and the president's son-in-law Jared Kushner would also be part of the negotiating team. The first round of historic direct US-Iran talks, held in Islamabad on April 11 and 12, had ended without an agreement, but also without a breakdown. The talks were held as a Pakistan-brokered two-week ceasefire between Washington.



ISLAMABAD: Security personnel stand guard near the Serena Hotel as the second round of talks between Iran and the United States takes place under heightened security measures in the capital.

## Economy can weather Iran war risks: SBP chief

PEAK POINT



KARACHI: State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) Governor Jameel Ahmad has said the country's key macroeconomic indicators have improved faster than anticipated at the start of the fiscal year, owing to a prudent mix of monetary and fiscal policies that helped stabilise inflation and strengthen external positions. While the ongoing conflict in the Middle East has introduced new risks and heightened uncertainty about the macroeconomic outlook, he said, the economy is relatively better positioned than during previous crises to manage these challenges. The SBP governor was speaking at meetings with senior executives of leading global financial and investment institutions, including JP Morgan, Barclays, Citibank, Jefferies and Franklin Templeton, as well as major credit rating agencies such as Fitch, Moody's and S&P Global. These engagements took place on the sidelines of the IMF-World Bank spring meetings held from April 13 to 18 in Washington. Mr Ahmad also held key meetings with the leadership of the IMF and World Bank Group.

## Iranian president insists on country's nuclear rights, ISNA reports

PEAK POINT



IRAN: United States President Donald Trump has no justification to deprive Iran of its nuclear rights, the Iranian Student News Agency quoted Iranian President Masoud Peshkian as saying on Sunday, as Washington and Tehran continue to face disagreements over nuclear issues. "Trump says Iran cannot make use of its nuclear rights, but doesn't say for what crime. Who is he to deprive a nation of its rights?" Peshkian was quoted as saying. Meanwhile, Iran's Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf said earlier that talks with the US to end the war had made progress but remained far from an agreement, as Tehran said the crucial Strait of Hormuz would remain closed until Washington lifts its naval blockade on Iranian ports. In a televised address to the nation on Saturday night, Ghalibaf said the "third imposed war" began during negotiations through US deception, adding that previous conflicts had also started with the assassination of commanders, Tasnim News reports. He said proposals relayed via countries, including Pakistan, were reviewed by Iran's security council, and Tehran resisted pressure and warned against escalation. He added that after failing militarily, the US turned to indirect messaging, while Iran remained resolute post-ceasefire.

## Over 10,000 police personnel deployed on security duty in Rawalpindi

PEAK POINT

RAWALPINDI/ISLAMABAD: Security has been put on high alert in Rawalpindi with the deployment of over 10,000 police personnel, as the second round of talks between the US and Iran is expected to be held in Islamabad. A police spokesman said more than 10,000 officers and personnel of Rawalpindi police were performing security duties, while over 600 special pickets were closely monitoring all the entry and exit routes of the city. Additional personnel have been deployed on highways. Moreover, 400 elite commandos, 100 sharpshooters, 4,000 personnel of Punjab Highway Patrol (PHP) and 200 well-equipped personnel of Dolphin Force had been deployed in the city to ensure foolproof security on the arrival of foreign delegations. As many as 400 elite commandos, including 100 snipers, will be part of the multi-layered security during the arrival and departure of the foreign delegations. Sources said the deployment of security personnel started at midnight on April 18 as foreign delegations will be landing at the Nur Khan Base Chaklala before moving to Islamabad. More than 3,600 police personnel will be deployed in the first shift starting from midnight to 12 on Sunday and 3,500 more in the second shift. The snipers deployed on the rooftops of buildings will keep eye contact with police personnel deployed on the ground and they will be in contact with each other via wireless.

## Pakistan, Poland reaffirm commitment to strengthen ties in high-level phone call

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar on Sunday received a telephone call from Polish Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Radostaw Sikorski, during which the two leaders discussed bilateral ties and key regional and global developments. According to the Foreign Office, both sides appreciated the positive momentum in Pakistan-Poland relations and reaffirmed their commitment to further strengthening cooperation in areas of mutual interest. Sikorski commended.

## North Korea fires ballistic missiles again, flexing muscle amid Iran war

PEAK POINT

NORTH KOREA: North Korea fired ballistic missiles into the sea on Sunday, accelerating its missile launches amid Iran war tensions and talk of possible meetings with the US and South Korea. Pyongyang's intense missile activity — this was the fourth such launch this month and the seventh of the year — is meant to display its self-defence capabilities while gaining international leverage, some experts said. "The missile launches may be a way of showing that — unlike Iran — we have self-defence capabilities," said South Korean former presidential security adviser Kim Ki-jung. "The North also appears to be exerting pressure preemptively and make a show of force

before engaging in dialogue with the United States and South Korea," he said. The seven-week-old US-Israeli war against Iran, which Washington says aims to curb Tehran's nuclear programme, could reinforce Pyongyang's nuclear ambitions, experts and former South Korean officials say. US President Donald Trump, preparing for a summit in China next month, and South Korean President Lee Jae Myung have repeatedly expressed



interest in holding talks with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un. There are no publicly known plans for any meetings. Lee recently conveyed regret to the North for drone incursions from the South, receiving rare praise from Pyongyang. Sunday's missiles were fired from near the city of Sinpo on North Korea's east coast toward the sea around 6:10am (2:10am PKT) and flew about 140km, South Korea's mil-

itary said in a statement. Japan's government posted on social media that the missiles were believed to have fallen near the east coast of the Korean Peninsula, and no incursion into Japan's exclusive economic zone had been confirmed. South Korea's presidential Blue House convened an emergency security meeting, calling the launches a provocation that violated UN Security Council resolutions, according to media reports. It urged Pyongyang to "stop the provocative acts". It was not clear what kind of ballistic missiles were fired, but Sinpo has submarines and equipment for test-firing submarine-launched ballistic missiles. The North last fired a ballistic missile from a submarine in May 2022, and it flew as far as 600km.

## Bushra seeks sentence suspension on medical grounds

PEAK POINT



ISLAMABAD: An application has been submitted to the Islamabad High Court (IHC) seeking suspension of the sentence of Bushra Bibi, the wife of incarcerated former prime minister Imran Khan, in the Al-Qadir Trust case on medical grounds. As the IHC division bench led by Chief Justice Sardar Sarfraz Dogar resumes hearing of Bushra Bibi and Imran's pleas seeking suspension of their sentences on April 22, their counsel Salman Safdar has moved an application to explain her health condition. The court has been requested to proceed with hearing and deciding, on priority and on merits, the applicant's application for suspension of sentence in the interest of justice and fair play. The application has been pending before the IHC for more than a year.



# SPORTS



## PSL 11: Karachi Kings win toss, opt to bowl first against Multan Sultans



**PEAK POINT**

KARACHI: Peshawar Zalmi secured a convincing 118-run victory over Quetta Gladiators, powered by Babar Azam's century and a disciplined bowling display, in the 29th match of PSL 11 at Karachi's National Bank Stadium on Sunday.

Set to chase a daunting 256-run target, the previous edition's runners-up could accumulate 137 runs before getting bowled out in 18.1 overs.

Middle-order batter Bevon Jacobs waged a lone battle for the Gladiators with a gutsy 34 off 27 deliveries, followed by young

opener Shami Hussain with 21, while Dinesh Chandimal, Alzarri Joseph, 19 each, and skipper Saud Shakeel (12) were the others to amass double figures.

Mohammad Basit and Ali Raza jointly spearheaded Zalmi's ruthless bowling charge with three wickets each, followed by Aaron Hardie with two, while Sufiyan Muqeem and Michael Bracewell chipped in with one apiece.

Quetta Gladiators captain Saud Shakeel's decision to field first backfired as the leaders piled up 255/3 in their 20 overs, courtesy of a century-plus partnership for the second wicket between Babar and

Mendis. Zalmi got off to a high-flying start to their innings as Mohammad Harris's blazing 16-run cameo upfront helped them raise 30 runs in just 1.3 overs until Alzarri Joseph gave the Gladiators a much-needed breakthrough by dismissing the opening batter on the subsequent delivery.

Following the setback, in-form Mendis joined skipper Babar in the middle, and the duo batted dominantly to stitch a monumental 135-run partnership for the second wicket, during which they both brought up their respective third half-century of the ongoing PSL

11. Usman Tariq eventually broke the threatening partnership on the first delivery of the 15th over by dismissing Mendis, who walked back after scoring 83 off 44 deliveries, laced with 10 fours and three sixes.

Babar then shared a brief 24-run partnership for the third wicket with youngster Farhan Yousaf, who contributed with an eight-ball 19, featuring two fours and a six.

The Zalmi captain then joined forces with all-rounder Aaron Hardie and ensured a strong finish with the bat for the leaders as the duo put together an unbeaten 66-run partnership.

## Pakistan's Nadia, Aqsa reflect on FIFA Series highs, heartbreak and the road ahead



**PEAK POINT**

KARACHI: The team bus was whistling and laughing after an 8-0 demolition. Four days later, the same players sat in a silent dressing room, a 1-0 loss to Mauritania playing on loop in their heads.

Pakistan's first-ever FIFA Series campaign contained both extremes — a record-breaking win, a narrow defeat that stung more than any other, and a fighting 2-0 loss to hosts Ivory Coast.

For forwards Nadia Khan and Aqsa Mushtaq — two of the squad's vital attacking voices — the tournament laid bare not just the team's potential, but also the structural gaps that keep Pakistan from climbing higher.

"It was such a proud feeling for me, scoring and becoming the leading scorer for Pakistan," Nadia told Dawn, reflecting on the moment she became the country's all-time top scorer. "I felt proud for what I've done for my country. Going back to that moment, I was just so excited and wanted to celebrate with the team."

That celebration came after an 8-0 dismantling of the Turks and Caicos Islands — a victory that surpassed Pakistan's previous best (7-0 against the Maldives, 2022) and sent the squad into a frenzy. But football, as Aqsa put it, has a way of humbling you. "The Mauritania loss hurt a lot more than the Ivory Coast one,".

## PSL 11: Multan Sultans secure 11-run win over Karachi Kings



**PEAK POINT**

KARACHI: Multan Sultans beat Karachi Kings by 11 runs by an exceptional batting display and disciplined bowling in the 28th match of the Pakistan Super League (PSL) 11 at Karachi's National Bank Stadium on Sunday.

Chasing 208, Kings were bowled out for 196 in 19.4 overs as Sultans produced an exceptional bowling display to

defend the target. The team got off to a solid start with openers Saad Baig and Jason Roy setting the tone, as runs flowed freely in the early stages of the game.

However, Arafat Minhas provided the breakthrough for Multan as he claimed his first wicket and ended the 29-run opening stand, with Roy dismissed after ducing an exceptional 21 deliveries, including

including four boundaries.

Reeza Hendricks and skipper Moeen Ali joined hands and stabilised the innings, putting together a 50-run stand which also helped the team's total cross the 100-run mark.

Hendricks was nearing yet another PSL half-century but fell short as he was dismissed by Mohammad Imran, which also ended the 67-run stand after contributing 49 runs off 32 deliveries, including five fours and two sixes.

On the first delivery of the 15th over, Karachi lost their fifth wicket as Ashton Turner struck and removed Moeen Ali, who scored 27 off 23 deliveries after hitting two sixes, leaving the team at 129-5.



LAHORE: Punjab Sports Minister Faisal Kokar distributing cash prizes during closing ceremony of National Marathon and Cycling Race here on Sunday.

## Pakistan 'in talks' with Argentina over potential friendly match

**PEAK POINT**

KARACHI: Pakistan and Argentina have held initial discussions over the possibility of an international friendly between their football teams, as part of broader talks on football development cooperation, sources privy to the matter said.

According to sources, officials from the Pakistan Football Federation (PFF) and the Argentine Football Association (AFA) held early-stage discussions during an online exchange, where they reviewed multiple areas of cooperation, including coaching development, technical training programmes and a potential friendly fixture. Both sides also discussed the possibility of Argentinean coaches visiting Pakistan under a structured development initiative and explored a wider technical collaboration framework aimed at strengthening Pakistan's football structure. An official statement shared

by Pakistan's mission in Argentina said a "productive and forward-looking meeting" was arranged and coordinated by the mission, bringing together the PFF and the AFA following AFA's launch of the "AFA Pakistan" brand and its expressed interest in

Hassan said the development presented "an excellent opportunity to strengthen collaboration and contribute to the growth of football in Pakistan". It added that Gilani welcomed AFA's outreach and emphasised the importance of developing the



building "meaningful engagement with Pakistan's football ecosystem."

The meeting, chaired by Ambassador Hassan Afzal Khan, was attended by PFF President Syed Mohsin Gilani and his team, along with AFA Marketing Director Francisco Lemmi, the statement said. According to the statement, Ambassador

partnership in a "structured and sustainable manner" aimed at long-term cooperation and mutual benefit. If finalised, the proposed friendly would take place after the Fifa World Cup, with both federations agreeing to continue working on various logistical and technical aspects before any confirmation.



LAHORE: Citizens participate in CM Punjab National Marathon and Cycling Race organised by Sports and Youth Affairs department here on Sunday.



# Photo Expo held at the PNCA, highlights suffering of Soviet people in WW-II

**PEAK POINT**

ISLAMABAD: A photo exhibition was held at the Pakistan National Council of the Arts highlighting the suffering of Soviet people during World War two. The exhibition was based on the theme "Day of Remembrance for Victims of Genocide of Soviet People (1941-1945)," referring to the period when Nazi Germany invaded the Soviet Union, an event linked with the wider context of the war. A delegation of teachers and students from Federal Urdu University Islamabad participated in the event



under the leadership of Dr. Faisal Javaid. Faculty members, including Dr. Sikander Zarren, Chuadary Rasheed and students were also part of the visit. The event was attended by diplomats

from several countries, including Russia, Iran, Azerbaijan, and Uzbekistan. The Russian Ambassador, while addressing the audience said that the sacrifices of Soviet people are often

overlooked in global narratives, adding that if the Soviet Union had not resisted Nazi forces, the map of Europe might have been different. Dr. Gul e Ayesha Bhatti, Director of

Consortium for Asia Pacific and European Studies, also spoke on the occasion and highlighted the importance of remembering historical tragedies. Participants paid tribute to the victims by

lighting candles, while the national anthems of Pakistan and Russia were also played. The exhibition displayed historical photographs portraying war victims, destruction, and survival stories from that era. On the occasion while talking with the media, Dr. Faisal Javaid said that Federal Urdu university actively promotes international collaboration and provides students with opportunities to engage with global issues, helping them broaden their academic and professional vision.

# GB caretaker minister for IT meets Huawei delegation to discuss digital transformation opportunities for GB

**PEAK POINT**

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Minister of Information Technology Gilgit Baltistan Ghulam Abbas visited the Huawei Technologies Pakistan office, where he met with a delegation from the company to discuss areas of mutual interest related to the advancement of ICT in the region of Gilgit Baltistan. During the meeting, both sides held detailed discussions on enhancing digital literacy for the youth of Gilgit

Baltistan, said a news release issued here on Saturday.

The Huawei delegation expressed strong interest in supporting capacity building initiatives through the Huawei ICT Certification Program, aimed at equipping young people with essential digital skills for emerging opportunities in the technology sector.

The delegation also requested the Minister's support in promoting the Prime Minister's ICT Training Initiative among



the youth of Gilgit Baltistan, enabling them to benefit from the program and contribute to the development

of a skilled workforce for the province.

Further discussions focused on technical and

vocational training to create immediate employment opportunities for the youth of Gilgit Baltistan. Both sides emphasized the importance of developing a trained talent pool that can support economic growth and meet the region's evolving workforce needs.

The meeting also covered opportunities to digitalise key sectors of the Gilgit Baltistan government, including tourism, health care, and mining. Both parties agreed that digital transformation across these sec-

tors would enhance service delivery, transparency, and operational efficiency.

The meeting concluded with a mutual commitment to work closely and take concrete steps toward strengthening the overall ICT landscape of the region.

Both sides reaffirmed their shared vision of bringing digital access and innovation to every person, home, and organization, contributing to a more connected and intelligent Gilgit Baltistan.

# Opinion & Editorial

Arif Mehmood Khan  
**DAILY PEAK POINT**  
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

## Shuttle diplomacy

Pakistan's mediation efforts to broker perpetual peace between the United States and Iran are now universally acknowledged. It is a marvellous achievement to influence the arch-rivals to get to the table after a destructive onslaught of 40 days that pushed the Middle East to the brink of a disaster, and threatened a global food and energy crisis. Islamabad was there in the midst at a time when world capitals were getting introspective and keeping their fingers crossed. Field Marshal Asim Munir and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif accomplished a novel task as they undertook a shuttle diplomacy to usher in sustainable peace in the region. The three-day visit of the Army Chief to Tehran came at a time when a fragile ceasefire was in place, as the US had undertaken its own unilateral blockade of the Straits of Hormuz in a tit-for-tat with Iran. The fact that the visiting delegate was able to iron out differences after meeting the Iranian President, the Speaker and the commander of Khatamul Anbiya Headquarters was a laudable feat, which resultantly led to a ceasefire in Lebanon too and the reopening of Hormuz for all vessels. Field Marshal Munir rightly underscored the need for dialogue, de-escalation and peaceful resolution of the outstanding issues through sustained diplomatic engagements.

## Healers who kill

**Zofeen T. Ebrahim**  
A DECADE and roughly 10 human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) outbreaks later, it's clear we've learned little, if anything.

Consider Taunsa: between November 2024 and October 2025, 331 children tested positive for HIV there. Eight months after a government crackdown on the Tehsil Headquarters Hospital, where the medical superintendent was removed and replaced, incriminating undercover footage by the BBC shows not much has changed.

Syringes being reused on multiple children, injections administered through clothing, a nurse rummaging through medical waste without gloves — these malpractices have been linked to the outbreak. The video was complemented by parents' confirmation of the reuse of syringes on their children. In more than half of these cases, a "contaminated needle" was identified as the mode of transmission.

With the health system a vortex of infection, and HIV no longer confined to certain high-risk groups, former SAPM on health, Dr Zafar Mirza, has waved a red flag in a recent tweet: "We are sitting on a generalised epidemic of AIDS in Pakistan", adding that estimates by UNAIDS point to Pakistan as the country with the fastest-growing number of AIDS cases in Asia.

The all-too-familiar cycle will unfold: eyebrows will rise, outrage will flare and the finger-pointing will begin, followed by inquiries. The media

will whip up a frenzy, the government will rap a few knuckles — and before long, it will all fade from our collective memory, until the next outbreak forces it back into view.

This pattern has been observed across four major outbreaks: in 2019, Larkana reported over 1,000 cases, up to 90 per cent of them children; in 2023, Jacobabad and Shikarpur became hotspots; in 2024, alongside Taunsa, Mirpurkhas emerged as "another Larkana" after 150 children tested positive, while in south Punjab, Dera Ghazi Khan saw a surge in HIV cases linked to unsafe sexual practices and the reuse of syringes by unqualified practitioners. In 2025, Hyderabad, Shaheed Benazirabad, Nausahro Feroze and Karachi's Pathan Colony also made headlines for rising HIV cases.

Parents took their sick children to those they trusted would heal them — only to return with a far more serious, lifelong infection. Yet, these criminal practices have failed to provoke the outrage they deserve from the public, health practitioners and even government. Nobody seems to know who to hold accountable, otherwise, why would these outbreaks continue so frequently? And in the Taunsa hospital's case, in particular, it is clear that the irresponsible behaviour never stopped despite a change in leadership. Along with implementation gaps, the lack of public awareness remains a stumbling block. Patients, especially in public hospitals, are not only

poor, but often poorly informed. They have little reason to suspect that a routine injection could leave them or their child with a lifelong infection. In rural and peri-urban communities, this already vulnerable population is left at the mercy of practitioners who can be insensitive, unskilled — even cruel. With little oversight or accountability, these health practitioners operate with near impunity. When senior officials dismiss the BBC's evidence of "repeated and serious breaches of basic infection control" as "staged", it raises a stark question: what real hope is there for accountability or recourse?

Another question that comes to mind is: why are these outbreaks happening in the first place? Is there an incentive to overuse injections and why is enforcement against syringe and needle reuse by the provincial health authorities weak, despite the various plans, policies and strategies? Four major policy responses — the National Injection Safety Policy (2004-05), the Prime Minister's Programme for Prevention and Control of Hepatitis (launched in 2005), the National Action Plan to Address Unsafe Injection Practices (2019-2021) and the National Infection Prevention & Control Strategic Framework/Guidelines (2021-23; 2025-30) — were all born out of deadly hepatitis C and HIV outbreaks, with the explicit aim of ending unsafe injections and syringe reuse.

Courtesy Dawn

## Know your enemy

**Anna Hashmi**

If you know yourself and know your enemy, you will not fear the results of 100 battles.

It is the most quoted military maxim in recorded history. It is also, without exception, the most ignored one.

We keep fighting the hundred battles. Consider Iran. The US has been grossly misinterpreting that nation for almost 47 years. All the sanctions, all the assassinations, all the ultimatums have been based upon the same false premise, that Iran is a Western rational actor, that pressure yields results, that a country will yield when its economy is bleeding. It doesn't. It thinks in decades and not election cycles.

It takes the punishment in proxies, Hezbollah, the Houthis, and militias in four countries, and never offers a clean target to retaliate. Sun Tzu called it formlessness. You cannot fight something that you cannot define. The maximum pressure doctrine by Trump is based on the assumption that the enemy will flinch. Sun Tzu knew better: a cornered enemy does not surrender. It fights to the last drop of blood. The existing nuclear brinkmanship with Tehran is not pressure at work; it is pressure that is breeding the very desperation it is said to be forestalling.

Then there is Gaza. Israel was familiar with Hamas tactically: its tunnels, its weapons, its command structure, but not with its strategic thinking on October 7th: that the attack was created as much to provoke a reaction as to cause one, making Israeli military superiority a liability in the international arena.

In its turn, Hamas did not fully count on the magnitude of the destruction that was to come. Two parties, each of which was sure it knew the other. Both turned out wrong. Sun Tzu would have recognised this; they were battling the foe they had imagined, not the one they had in front of them.

Courtesy Tribune

## Minister affirms govt providing pilgrims best possible facilities as PIA launches Haj operation



PEAK POINT

LAHORE: Religious affairs minister Sardar Muhammad Yousuf on Sunday affirmed that the government was providing Haj pilgrims with the best possible facilities as the Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) began its Haj operation.

Pilgrims were seen off at the Islamabad International Airport by Yousuf and other senior officials at the airport, state-run Radio Pakistan reported.

It added that the Road to Makkah

project has been expanded to Lahore, in addition to Karachi and Islamabad, and is expected to benefit over 95,000 pilgrims this year.

A PIA spokesperson had earlier said that the first flight of the Haj operation (PK-747), carrying over 390 pilgrims, was set to depart from Sialkot for Madinah, which took off past 2am. At the Islamabad airport, the Haj operation's first flight from the capital (PK-753) took off for Riyadh shortly after 9am.

Addressing the ceremony in Islamabad, the minister said Pakistan completed the Haj preparations within the stipulated time with the support of the Saudi government, adding that the government was providing the pilgrims with the best possible facilities.

He highlighted that the Road to Makkah project allows pilgrims to complete Saudi immigration and other formalities at their departure airport, making their arrival in Saudi

Arabia smoother, Radio Pakistan reported.

Pilgrims will also be provided with e-SIM cards, enabling them to remain in contact with their families in Pakistan, the minister said. Other facilities included modern tents and high-speed trains connecting Makkah and Madinah for convenient travel.

The minister expressed gratitude to Saudi King Salman Bin Abdul Aziz, Crown Prince Muhammad Bin Salman, and Haj Minister Tawfiq bin Fawzan Al Rabiah for their support and guidance in facilitating the Haj preparations. He congratulated the pilgrims on embarking on a blessed journey and urged them to represent Pakistan with "honour and dignity during their pilgrimage", the report added.

A PIA spokesperson said that under the government scheme, 49,000 pilgrims will travel, while over 6,000 pilgrims through private Haj group operators.

## Pakistan, Rwanda agree to enhance bilateral cooperation



PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Rwandan High Commissioner to Pakistan Fatou Harerimana called on Chairman Senate Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani in Multan, where both sides discussed ways to strengthen bilateral ties.

The meeting focused on promoting cooperation, matters of

mutual interest, and the broader regional situation. Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to enhancing Pakistan-Rwanda relations at bilateral and multilateral levels.

Gilani said Pakistan and Rwanda enjoy cordial relations and emphasized the need to expand collaboration across various sectors.

## OICCI urges Minister Kayani to expand tax net, not burden

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: The Overseas Investors Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OICCI) has urged the government to prioritise expanding the tax net instead of increasing the burden on existing taxpayers, during a meeting with Minister of State for Finance Bilal Azhar Kayani.

During the visit of Minister of State Kayani to the chamber, the OICCI elaborated its key tax recommendations for the Federal Budget 2026-27, developed through extensive member consultations. Tax Policy Office (TPO) Director General Dr Najeeb Memon also participated virtually in the meeting.

The engagement formed part of the Ministry of Finance's ongoing budget formulation process and the federal minister for finance and revenue's consultations with industry stakeholders.

The minister of state welcomed input from foreign investors and highlighted the importance of sustained stakeholder engagement to

support growth, broaden the tax base and enhance transparency.

The chamber proposed reducing the corporate tax rate to 28% in FY2026-27, with a phased reduction to 25% over three years, and the gradual abolition of the super tax. It noted that the combined impact of corporate tax, super tax, workers welfare fund and workers profit participation fund raises the effective tax rate to nearly 46%.

The OICCI also highlighted that disproportionately high taxation on the banking sector can act as a constraint on economic growth by affecting banks' ability to efficiently deploy capital, which in turn impacts the availability and cost of working capital for businesses across the economy.

To retain talent, the OICCI recommended abolishing the super tax and the 10% surcharge on higher-income salaried brackets, and capping the maximum personal tax rate at 25%. Further proposals included rationalising withholding taxes.

## Nawaz Sharif calls key meeting for GB election ticket distribution

PEAK POINT

LAHORE: The ruling party, the Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) president and former prime minister Nawaz Sharif, has convened an important meeting of the party's parliamentary board on 20 April in Murree to finalise ticket distribution for the Gilgit-Baltistan elections 2026.

Around 150 candidates have submitted applications for party tickets across 24 constituencies in Gilgit-Baltistan.

The sources said the parliamentary board will review these applications and finalise the names of candidates during the upcoming meeting.

Party sources said discussions will also include possible political alliances and new party entrants as part of the broader electoral strategy.

The Pakistan Muslim League (N) has formed a 23-member parliamentary board to oversee and approve ticket allocations. The board includes senior party leaders such as Shehbaz Sharif, Ishaq Dar, Ahsan Iqbal, Khawaja Asif, Maryam Nawaz.

## Minister Aurangzeb advances economic diplomacy

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, concluded final day of IMF-WB Spring Meetings in Washington. He held a series of high-level bilateral meetings with global financial institutions, development partners and private sector stakeholders to advance Pakistan's economic priorities and strengthen international partnerships.

During a meeting with Francis Brooke, Deputy Secretary at the United States Department of the Treasury, the minister shared Pakistan's progress on macroeconomic stabilization, re-entry into international capital markets, and prudent external debt management, according to press release issued by the Finance Ministry here Saturday.

He highlighted investment opportunities in Pakistan's miner-



als and energy sectors and briefed the US side on ongoing efforts related to digital and virtual asset regulation.

Both sides also discussed avenues for cooperation in energy, mineral development, and strengthening anti-money laundering and counter-financing of terrorism frameworks.

The minister reaffirmed the depth of bilateral economic engagement and underscored the importance of continued US support for Pakistan's IMF programme. Senator Aurangzeb also met Dr Kalpana Kochhar, President for Global Policy.

## Rs120m floating jetty construction starts at KofHA to boost seafood exports: Junaid Anwar

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs, Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chaudhry on Saturday announced that construction work has begun on an environmentally efficient floating jetty at the Korangi Fisheries Harbour Authority (KofHA) at a cost of Rs 120 million to facilitate the offloading of export-quality fish catches. The minister was chairing a meeting of the KofHA board, attended by its Director General Dr Shahid Aslam, Chairman Abrar Asim and other members. He said the project was a significant step towards improving facilities for small-scale fisherfolk, adding that the jetty was



expected to be completed by June 2026. Junaid Chaudhry said the initiative would ensure safer and more reliable access to the water, while facilitating the smooth landing and unloading of fish catch. He said the project aimed to boost operational efficiency and create new economic opportunities for coastal communities. Highlighting key features, the minister.



KARACH: Minister of State for Finance, Bilal Azhar Kayani, engages with Karachi's business community at the FBR office to discuss tax reforms and gather stakeholder feedback for the upcoming budget.

## Pakistan playing constructive role in promoting dialogue, lasting peace: Ayaz Sadiq

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Speaker of National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq on Saturday said Pakistan has consistently played a constructive role in promoting dialogue and bringing parties closer to the negotiating table, reaffirming that diplomacy and engagement remain vital for achieving lasting peace.

On the sidelines of the 152nd General Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) in Istanbul, he met with Speaker of the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye, Numan Kurtulmus.

At the beginning of the meeting, Ayaz Sadiq warmly congratulated the Turkish Speaker, as well as the government and people of Türkiye, on successfully hosting the 152nd IPU General Assembly.

He praised Türkiye's hospitality and appreciated the active participation of parliamentarians from around the world, describing it as a reflection of parliamentary diplomacy and international cooperation. Ayaz Sadiq said such global parliamentary forums offer an important opportunity for elected repre-



sentatives to exchange views, share experiences, and discuss common challenges, while promoting democratic values, mutual understanding, and dialogue for global peace and development.

During the meeting, both

leaders discussed bilateral ties, regional developments, and matters of mutual interest, reaffirming the deep-rooted brotherly relations between Pakistan and Türkiye.

Ayaz Sadiq stressed that

war and conflict could not resolve disputes and emphasized that sustainable solutions could only be achieved through meaningful and continued dialogue. He reiterated Pakistan's commitment to peace, stability, and mutual respect, while underscoring its continued support for tolerance, diplomacy, and constructive global engagement alongside strong relations with brotherly Islamic countries.

On the occasion, the Turkish Speaker appreciated Pakistan's positive role in promoting regional peace

and acknowledged its timely efforts in reducing tensions and averting wider crises.

He particularly praised the leadership of Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Muhammad Ishaq Dar, and Chief of Army Staff and Chief of Defence Forces Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir.

Both Speakers agreed to further strengthen parliamentary diplomacy through greater institutional cooperation, exchange of delegations.