



Pak, Tajikistan agree to advance trade, transit Cooperation, explore new Corridor mechanisms



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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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Middle East war hit Pakistan's two years of economic gains, says PM Shehbaz

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has said that the ongoing conflict in the Middle East has dealt a serious blow to Pakistan's economic progress achieved over the past two years. Addressing a federal cabinet meeting on Wednesday, the premier said that the conflict has triggered a sharp rise in global oil prices, creating an extraordinary situation in international markets. He added that Brent crude prices have surged to \$114.64 per barrel. The conflict began on February 28 when the United States and Israel attacked Iran, leading to instability across the Middle East, disrupting energy markets and pushing global oil prices upward. PM Shehbaz said that Pakistan's

weekly oil import bill has increased from \$300 million before the conflict to \$800 million. He added that rising global prices are affecting ongoing efforts to stabilise the economy. He further said that a task force is monitoring the situation on a daily basis, while consultations with provincial governments are also underway to continue subsidies in public transport and other sectors. Collective efforts, he said, are needed to tackle the challenges, urging that work must continue day and night to overcome the situation.

The prime minister said Pakistan has repaid \$3.5 billion in external debt and expressed gratitude for the support of the Saudi leadership in helping the country.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs the meeting of the Federal Cabinet.

Iran expected to make new offer to 'reluctant' US

PEAK POINT



WASHINGTON: Even as US President Donald Trump appeared reluctant to accept an Iranian offer to end the Middle East war, reports suggested Tehran would share a fresh proposal with Pakistan "in the next few days", despite a public show of defiance.

According to CNN, Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi will consult Iranian leaders upon his return from Russia for the new proposal, but "process is slow" due to "difficulty in communicating with Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei, whose location is being kept secret".

The development came as President Trump reviewed the Iranian proposals amid concerns over the Pentagon's assessment of the ongoing war with Iran. Senior Iranian officials told Reuters the proposal carried by Iran's Araghchi to Islamabad over the weekend envisioned talks in stages, with the nuclear issue to be set aside at the start.

A first step would require ending the US-Israeli war on Iran and providing guarantees that the US cannot start it up again. Then negotiators would resolve the US Navy's blockade of Iran's trade by sea.

'No more nice guy': Trump tells Iran to 'get smart soon' on nuclear deal

MAHPARA ZAMAN



NEW YORK: US President Donald Trump on Wednesday urged Iran to "get smart soon" over a nuclear deal, declaring: "No more Mr. nice guy!"

"Iran can't get their act together. They don't know how to sign a non-nuclear deal. They better get smart soon," Trump threatened on his Truth

Social platform on Wednesday. Notably, the post included an image of the US president wearing a black suit and sunglasses while holding a firearm, with explosions in an Iranian landscape behind him. The US and Israel launched a joint offensive against Iran on February 28, prompting Tehran to respond with strikes on what it described as US interests across the region, many of them in Gulf countries. A ceasefire was announced on April 8 through Pakistani mediation, followed by talks hosted in Islamabad on April 11-12, but the negotiations ended without an agreement. Trump later said the truce had been extended at Pakistan's request pending a proposal from Tehran. He signalled on Monday that he was unlikely to accept Iran's latest proposal to end the war after Tehran proposed a plan to reopen the Strait of Hormuz while leaving questions about its nuclear program for later negotiations.

The Wall Street Journal (WSJ) cited US officials as saying the president had instructed aides to prepare for an extended blockade of Iran's ports in a bid to force Tehran to capitulate.

IHC to hear Imran, Bushra's pleas against conviction in £190m reference on today

PEAK POINT



ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Wednesday fixed appeals filed by former prime minister Imran Khan and his spouse Bushra Bibi

against conviction in the £190 million corruption reference for tomorrow (April 30).

According to the supplementary cause list issued by the registrar's office, a division bench comprising Chief Justice Sardar Muhammad Sarfraz Dogar and Justice Muhammad Asif will take up CrI. Appeal 63/2025 (filed by Imran) and CrI. Appeal 64/2025 (filed by Bushra) on Thursday.

Both appeals challenge the convictions under the Pakistan Penal Code with sentences exceeding seven years. The cause list mentioned that miscellaneous applications — including those seeking suspension of sentence along with objections — were also pending before the court.

The development comes a day after the same bench, during the hearing of separate petitions seeking suspension of sentence in the £190m corruption reference.

Operation Ghazab Lil-Haq: Pak Army destroys several Afghan Taliban posts, vehicles

PEAK POINT

QUETTA: Pakistan Army precisely targeted and destroyed several Afghan Taliban posts and vehicles in the Chaman sector in response to unprovoked aggression by Afghan Taliban and Fitna al-Khwarizj and Fitna al-Khwarizj on the Pak-Afghan border. The effective response of the Pak Army have forced the Afghan Taliban and Fitna al-Khwarizj to retreat. The unwavering resolve of the security forces to defend the homeland is ensuring the country's territorial integrity, they said. Security sources said that Operation Ghazab Lil-Haq will continue.

On last day in IHC, Justice Kayani warns of summoning PM

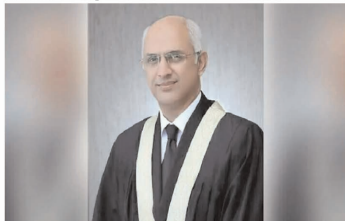
PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Hours before his imminent transfer from the Islamabad High Court (IHC), Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kayani warned that the high court would summon Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif in a case concerning the non-appointment of the finance member of the PTA tribunal.

During the hearing, Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kayani warned that if the official was not appointed by May 18, the PM would be required to appear in person and explain the delay.

The court also directed the cabinet secretary and the law secretary to ensure their presence at the next hearing on May 18. However, Justice Kayani was transferred by the

Judicial Commission of in various tribunals. Pakistan a couple of hours In its written order



after issuing the said order. At the previous hearing, the assistant attorney general informed the court that a retired judge had been appointed as a tribunal member. However, Justice Kayani criticised the trend of appointing retired judges to tribunals, remarking that such practices had not been beneficial and that retired judges frequently seek positions

spanning two pages, the court noted that the federal government had been seeking repeated adjournments over the last four hearings regarding the appointment of the finance member. Granting a final opportunity, the court stated that failure to make the appointment by the next hearing would result in the PM being summoned in

his personal capacity.

The court directed that, in case of non-compliance, the cabinet secretary and the law secretary must also appear and explain the obstacles in the appointment process. The federal government, once again requesting time, informed the court that the summary for the appointment had been returned after objections were raised.

It is worth noting that the Telecommunications Appellate Tribunal, established under the Telecommunications Appellate Tribunal Act 2024, was formally notified on September 28, 2024. However, the key position of the finance member remained vacant. The hearing has been adjourned until May 18, 2026.

Terrorist killed as attack on Bannu police post thwarted



PEAK POINT

BANNU: A terrorist was killed early Wednesday when Bannu police repelled an attack on the Mazanga police post, officials said.

Police officials said heavily armed terrorists attacked the post in the early hours of Wednesday, but personnel responded promptly and foiled the assault. An intense exchange of fire between police and the attackers continued for some time, leaving one terrorist dead and several others injured.

The wounded attackers were taken away by their accomplices under the cover of darkness. Following the incident, Bannu District Police Officer (DPO) Yasir Afridi, along with Deputy Superintendent of Police.



SPORTS



Hyderabad Kingsmen crush Multan Sultans to stay alive in PSL 11 title race



PEAK POINT

KARACHI: Half-centuries from Usman Khan and Maaz Sadaqat, combined with disciplined bowling, powered Hyderabad Kingsmen to an eight-wicket victory over Multan Sultans in Pakistan Super League (PSL) 11's Eliminator 1 on Wednesday.

Kingsmen's victory in the high-stakes fixture drew curtains on Sultans' campaign and meant that the new entrants will go on and face three-time champions Islamabad United in the Eliminator 2 at the same venue on Friday in a bid to qualify for the eight-team tournament's final.

Set to chase a 160-run target, the Kingsmen comfortably knocked the winning runs for the loss of just two wickets and 28 balls to spare, courtesy of the second-wicket partnership between Usman and Sadaqat.

The Kingsmen, however, had a contrasting start to the pursuit as they lost their captain, Marnus Labuschagne (11), in the second over with 18 runs on the board.

Following the early setback, in-form wicketkeeper batter Usman joined Sadaqat in the middle, and the duo batted dominantly to put together 92 runs for the second wicket. Usman, who was the

core aggressor of the vital stand, was eventually removed by Steve Smith in the 11th over. He walked back after top-scoring for the Kingsmen with a swashbuckling 64 off 35 deliveries, studded with eight fours and three sixes.

Sadaqat was then joined by Saim Ayub in the middle, and the duo batted sensibly to steer the Kingsmen over the line in the 16th over. The left-handed opener remained the joint top-scorer for the Kingsmen with an unbeaten 64 off 35 deliveries, comprising eight fours and three sixes, while Saim Philippe (six) lbw, and consequently slipped to 36/3 inside the

could pick up a wicket apiece.

Put into bat first in the high-stakes fixture, the Sultans finished at 159/9 in their 20 overs, courtesy of Masood. The Sultans got off to a shaky start to their innings as Muhammad Ali dismissed their experienced opener Steve Smith (13) in the third over with just 28 runs on the board. Kingsmen then lost two more wickets in successive overs as Akif Javed got in-form opener Sahibzada Farhan (15) caught at cover point, while Hunain Shah trapped Josh Philippe (six) lbw, and consequently slipped to 36/3 inside the batting powerplay.

Coach Sarfaraz unfazed by criticism



PEAK POINT

KARACHI: Pakistan Test head coach Sarfaraz Ahmed on Wednesday brushed aside criticism over his appointment, saying he remains focused on preparing the national side for their upcoming ICC World Test Championship (WTC) 2025-27 fixtures against Bangladesh.

Speaking during a training camp at the Hanif Mohammad High-Performance Centre in the National Bank Stadium in Karachi, Sarfaraz acknowledged the debate surrounding his transition from player to head coach but insisted external opinions would not distract him.

"Former cricketers and my ex-colleagues have their own opinions," he said. "I am very positive about making the most of this new opportunity."

Sarfaraz, who recently took over as Pakistan Test head coach, emphasised that his focus remains on building a cohesive unit ahead of the two-match Test series against Bangladesh, a key assignment in the World Test Championship 2025-27 cycle.

The former Pakistan captain expressed confidence in his support staff, highlighting a collective approach to coaching.

ITF Men's Futures M-15 Tournament continues



PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Tennis Federation (PTF) is pleased to announce that the Flair Travel ITF Men's Futures M-15 (Leg-1) tournament continued here at the PTF Tennis Complex on Wednesday. This tournament is being organised in memory of Khawaja Iftikhar Ahmad, a respected former tennis player of the subcontinent, in recognition of his valuable contributions to the sport and his lasting legacy in regional tennis history. Iftikhar holds the unique distinction of being the one and only player

to be ranked No. 1 in pre-1947 India and subsequently No. 1 in Pakistan for a decade in the post-independence era. In recognition of his outstanding services to the sport, he was awarded the Presidential Medal "Pride of Performance" in 1964 by Field Marshal Ayub Khan.

A total of 70 men's players from 23 countries are participating in this prestigious international event. The participating nations include Pakistan, Kuwait, Russia, Uzbekistan, Sweden, Australia, Malaysia, Great Britain, Italy, Lithuania, China, Turkey, Algeria,

Canada, USA, Ireland, Poland, Hong Kong, Nepal, Greece, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, and Japan.

Top seed of the tournament is Leo Borg of Sweden, currently ranked ATP 483, while the second seed is Samir Hamza Reguig of Algeria, holding an ATP ranking of 844.

On Day 2 of the main draw, Pakistani players delivered strong performances as Muhammad Shoab and Barkatullah both secured important victories to advance into the next round of the Men's Singles event.

Pakistan bags three medals at Asian Beach Games with strong show in wrestling, kabaddi



PFF chief holds high-profile meetings ahead of FIFA Congress in Canada

PEAK POINT
ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Football Federation delegation

Congress on Thursday, German Football Association (DFB) president Bernd Neundorff extended an invitation to series were also held. Pakistan players and coaches to visit its support in activating Germany and learn the Pakistan com-

Pakistan boosts women's boxing growth plan



PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Boxing Federation (PBF) is taking measures to accelerate the growth of women's boxing, nurture new talent, and prepare female boxers for success at the international level. PBF President Lt Col (R) Muhammad Nasir Ijaz

Tung in a statement said the federation, with the backing of the Pakistan Army, Pakistan Olympic Association (POA), and other stakeholders, would launch further initiatives to provide quality training, better facilities, and greater global exposure to women boxers.

He said women's boxing in Pakistan formally began in 2018 with the first-ever National Women's Boxing Championship in Lahore, laying the foundation for the structured development of the sport. The momentum continued in 2022 with the first Inter-University

Women's Boxing Championship, which significantly widened the talent pool.

Tung added that national, provincial, and departmental competitions, along with participation in the National Games, had played a key role in expanding women's boxing across the country.

Highlighting Pakistan's growing success on the world stage, he said Laura Akram won bronze at the World Championships, while Fatima Zahra secured Pakistan's first-ever women's boxing medal at the Islamic Solidarity Games.



led by president Syed Mohsen Gilani held high-profile meetings after attending the 36th AFC Congress in Vancouver, Canada on Tuesday. PFF president Mr Gilani, vice-president Hafiz Zakaullah and Operating Officer Shahid Niaz Khokhar, who are in Canada for the 76th FIFA

Neundorff, Canada Soccer president Peter Augroso, Chinese Football Federation (CFA) president Song Kai and Tajikistan Football Federation (TFF) vice-president Dzhaliyev Iskandar. The DFB offered PFF full support on several avenues including coaches education and women's football. Mr

from the high quality footballing ecosystem there. In the meeting with Canada Soccer president, PFF president thanked Canada for their hospitality during the FIFA Congress. With support in fiscal training with the PFF inviting Mr Kai for a visit to Pakistan. Both federations agreed to a detailed meeting after the World Cup.



38 Kanals secured, 6-7 Kanals encroached at Kashmir Point Murree as Senate Panel orders urgent action

NADEEM TANOLI
ISLAMABAD: A prime government property at Kashmir Point in Murree has become the center of a growing land dispute, with 6 to 7 kanals still under illegal occupation despite official claims of securing the majority of the site. During a Senate Standing Committee briefing, officials revealed that a total of 38 kanals linked to Constantia Lodge have been identified and fenced. However, a significant portion remains encroached and is currently tied up in litigation, preventing full possession of the

land. The committee expressed concern over the continued illegal occupation of such a high value location and directed authorities to expedite legal proceedings to reclaim the remaining land. Lawmakers stressed that delays in court action are effectively allowing encroachments to persist at one of Murree's most strategic and sensitive sites. The case highlights broader concerns about land management and enforcement in tourist hotspots, where valuable public assets often face prolonged legal battles and weak on-

ground enforcement. Officials acknowledged that while physical demarcation has been completed, the unresolved encroachment continues to hinder full utilization and control of the property. The Senate panel's intervention signals increasing pressure on authorities to deliver results, with instructions to fast-track litigation and ensure complete recovery of the encroached land. The outcome of the case is likely to set a precedent for handling similar encroachment disputes in Murree and other high-value areas.

National Assembly gender review reveals deep rooted barriers to women's participation

PEAK POINT
ISLAMABAD: A high level internal review has exposed persistent structural and cultural barriers limiting women's effective participation in Pakistan's Parliament, raising fresh questions about the depth of gender equality within the legislative system. During a virtual session organized by the Women's Parliamentary Caucus in collaboration with UN Women, lawmakers acknowledged that despite visible progress in representation, women

still face systemic challenges that restrict their influence in decision making and leadership roles. The discussion, chaired by Dr. Shahida Rehmani, was part of an ongoing gender analysis of the National Assembly of Pakistan. Participants candidly highlighted gaps in institutional practices, workplace environment, and political party dynamics that continue to hinder meaningful inclusion. Officials admitted that while women's presence in Parliament has increased over time, deeper

issues rooted in organizational culture and governance structures remain unresolved. These include limited representation in leadership positions, weak integration of gender perspectives in legislation, and systemic barriers within parliamentary processes. The session also brought forward concerns about the role of political parties, with participants stressing that internal party structures often fail to promote women into positions of real authority, further reinforcing inequality within the system.

AIOU starts cardiac screening drive following employee health concerns

PEAK POINT
ISLAMABAD: Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) has launched a free cardiac screening program for its employees in response to growing health concerns, particularly after the recent sudden deaths of several staff members due to heart-related illnesses. The initiative has been introduced under the directives of Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood who took immediate notice of the situation and approved the program to ensure the well-being of university employees. The

screening is being conducted at the university's Healthcare Center and aims to facilitate early diagnosis and prevention of heart diseases. Speaking at the inauguration ceremony, the Vice Chancellor emphasized that timely diagnosis plays a vital role in preventing life-threatening conditions and saving precious lives. He reaffirmed the administration's commitment to prioritizing employee health and stated that no negligence would be tolerated in this regard. He also instructed the relevant authorities to



expand the program to regional campuses on an emergency basis so that employees working in remote areas can also benefit from the facility. Furthermore, he directed that employees identified with potential cardiac issues during screening should be referred to cardiology specialists without delay, with the university bearing the full cost of their treatment. Under the program, around 800 employees will undergo initial medical tests in phases. A total of 20 batches have been formed to ensure smooth and timely screening. The test reports will be reviewed by Dr. Shaheera Kabsha who will provide further medical guidance based on individual cases. Director Administration and Coordination, Prof. Dr. Syed Amir Shah, stated that a comprehensive plan has been developed to ensure the effective implementation of the program and

timely screening of all employees. Dr. Shaheera Kabsha appreciated the initiative, noting that early detection not only reduces the severity of diseases but also helps prevent long-term complications, ultimately improving the overall health of employees. The ceremony was attended by senior university officials, including Dean Faculty of Science Prof. Dr. Sher Muhammad, Director General Regional Services Dr. Malik Tauqeer Ahmed Khan, Registrar Raja Umar Younis and other principal officers.

Opinion & Editorial

Arif Mehmood Khan
Group Editor: 0333-5366814
Samra Athar Kakakhel
Resident Editor
Nadim Tanoli
Joint Editor: Mob-0301-777874
Email: editor.peakpoint@gmail.com
www.peakpoint.pk

Addressing the fault lines

Ghazan Jamal
WHILE the world is fixated, rightly so, on the war in the Gulf, another conflict closer to home is largely going unnoticed. True, the level of devastation in the hostilities between Pakistan and Afghanistan is nowhere near that in Iran. But, in many ways, it is a far more perplexing conflict. Given the long-standing animosity pitting Iran against the US and Israel, President Donald Trump's exit from the nuclear weapons agreement in his first term, and US military build-up near Iran weeks before the attack, the American-Israeli strike, say experts, was a matter of 'when' and not 'if'. On the other hand, the 2021 Taliban takeover in Afghanistan was celebrated as a success of two decades of Pakistan's covert foreign policy. Yet, just a few years later, heavy fighting between the two has broken out. This is surprising given that, historically, the Pakistani state has perceived the threat along its western border from communist and nationalist groups, not religious movements. Since independence, the state has had a complicated relationship with nationalist groups in the smaller provinces and has largely been suspicious of them. Given that the main Pakhtun nationalist party at the time of independence, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan's Khudai Khidmatgar, campaigned against KP (then

NWFP) joining Pakistan, advocating instead for the creation of Pakhtunistan, it is not difficult to see where this scepticism comes from. However, since then, Pakhtun nationalist groups, including Ghaffar Khan's own party, have moved towards advocating for more autonomy within the larger federal structure than seeking a separate homeland. Even so, in the early years, separatist murmurs within these movements continued, if not amongst the leadership, then definitely among some supporters. Against this backdrop, the state saw an opportunity in the Soviet-Afghan war to support religiously motivated militant groups in KP, not only to bolster jihad efforts in Afghanistan, but also to weaken nationalist voices at home. After the Soviet exit from Afghanistan, these groups continued to serve a purpose both as an important foreign policy tool to ensure a Pakistan-friendly government in Afghanistan, and to undermine regional nationalist voices in KP. After the US invasion of Afghanistan, covert support from the state to the Afghan Taliban continued. In fact, many Pakistani leaders lauded the Taliban takeover of Kabul in late 2021, proclaiming that the Afghans had 'broken the shackles of slavery'.

But ironically, instead of the stabilising effect security experts in Pakistan had hoped for, insecurity in KP increased exponentially. According to the South Asia Terrorism Portal, 118 people (civilians and security forces) were killed in 2020 in acts of terrorism in KP. In 2025, the number of casualties had risen to 723 — an increase of over 500 per cent. Rather than being pro-Pakistan that Islamabad had hoped for, the new Afghan Taliban regime has been a greater threat to Pakistan's security than any other previous Afghan regime. In the last three years, Pakistan has reportedly bombed targets in Kabul more than once, and numerous border skirmishes have taken place. The border crossings between the two countries have lately remained closed. The movement that was envisioned to unify the country and secure its western border, has now become a challenge to national cohesion here. Since independence, the state has had a complicated relationship with nationalist groups in the smaller provinces. In the meantime, the Pakhtun nationalist movement has been fractured into numerous political and apolitical societal groups, but almost all of them are striving for more rights and autonomy within the Pakistani federation. Regrettably, the benefits of accepting these goals on their own merit may be lost on the state, even though many of them share a common purpose: to bring peace and stability to Pakhtun hinterlands. Courtesy Dawn

The problems beyond science

Muhammad Hamid Zaman
THE idea of science-based policy in a society is a relatively simple one. Let rigorous science generate evidence for what works and what does not, and then incorporate those findings in a policy to benefit society. Of course, it is much easier said than done. Scientific findings can be murky and different studies can contradict each other. Research funded by for-profit entities can be biased and steer researchers in a direction that are good for the companies, but not necessarily the public. Thinking only about the good of the majority may mean minority groups that are vulnerable or historically marginalised may continue to suffer. Lately, pushback through misinformation on issues ranging from vaccines to climate change has further undermined the foundational ideas of science-based policy. And then there is something else. A complete disregard for scientific findings and predictions, which are not disputed on merit or ethics, but simply because there is no interest in pursuing them. In 2019, when an HIV outbreak in rural Sindh made international headlines, many in the public health sector of the country had warned that this was unlikely to be an anomaly. In fact, infectious disease researchers had been warning about micro epidemics in other parts of the country, including southern Punjab. In 2024, when a cluster of patients were infected with HIV at the dialysis unit at Nishtar Hospital in Multan due to criminal negligence, public health practitioners had warned once again about other likely outbreaks. We now know that they were right. Another outbreak, this time in Taunsa, has affected several hundred children who were given the disease by those who were entrusted to treat them. The BBC report that uncovered the awful tragedy in Taunsa is difficult to watch. Those children, whose lives have been permanently altered, are not some distant people; they are our own children. Courtesy Tribune

Trump life attempt

Saturday's assassination attempt on US President Donald Trump at the White House Correspondents' Dinner was resolved without any loss of life, but it was hardly a win for the people charged with keeping the president safe. The would-be assassin managed to clear several layers of security in the hotel, and was just a few metres away from the door to the hall where Trump, his wife and several others were visible from the back of the hall. If not for the blind luck of security officials who were able to tackle him, including a Secret Service officer who was shot - the only person injured in the incident apart from the shooter himself - the incident could have been much worse, given that the shooter was able to fire six shots with a pistol and had other weapons on his person as well. Reports suggest that the suspect was able to get a large cache of weapons past security by using a rather simple plan - showing up at the hotel a day earlier and renting a room. Most US hotels do not check guests' luggage, so while security officials were making life difficult for event attendees, hotel guests and passersby outside the hotel, the would-be killer was already inside. Part of the reason Trump and his team have to label the exercise as a success is that Trump's downsizing of the government - ostensibly to finance last year's tax cuts.

Ahsan calls for unified, science-driven strategy to ensure national water security



PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal on Wednesday outlined a comprehensive, multi-pronged national strategy to tackle Pakistan's growing water crisis, urging a unified, science-based approach to ensure long-term water security.

Addressing a Round Table Consultation on National Water Security under "Uraan Pakistan," the minister said the country's water challenge was no longer limited to

scarcity but also stemmed from persistent mismanagement.

"Sometimes we face extreme shortage and at other times destructive floods, therefore, water management is as critical as water availability," he remarked.

Calling for a shift beyond "traditional statements," Ahsan stressed the need for a national consensus on water conservation and a cohesive water security policy.

"This challenge cannot be solved in silos, whether between federation and provinces, sectors or regions. It has now become a matter of national security," he said, warning that external pressures, including attempts to use water as a strategic tool, had further heightened vulnerabilities.

The minister emphasized that Pakistan's response must be "national, united, scientific and future-proof," identifying key pillars of a multi-dimensional strategy.

Highlighting limited storage capacity as a major concern, he mentioned that Pakistan could store water for only around 90 days, far below global benchmarks.

He called for a national agreement on expanding water reservoirs through large, medium and small dams, recharge and delay-action dams, floodwater reservoirs, hill torrent management and urban rainwater harvesting. "New water reserves should be seen as the foundation of national survival, not political debate," he added.

On water use efficiency, Ahsan pointed out that agriculture consumed the bulk of water but with low productivity due to outdated irrigation practices.

He proposed a national water efficiency and conservation mission, including modernization of irrigation systems, laser land leveling, drip and sprinkler technologies, digital irrigation.

Govt targets 60% fiberization in three years: Shaza Fatima

PEAK POINT



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication Shaza Fatima Khawaja on Wednesday said the government aims to raise fiberization to nearly 60 percent within the next three years.

Speaking at the EU-Pakistan Business Forum 2026, she said, "Only 16 percent of our towers are fiberized at this point. Our target is that in the next three years, we will increase that to almost 60 percent." She said Pakistan is also working to significantly expand fiber connectivity at the household level, increasing fiberized home passes from around 2-3 million to at least 10 million within the next two years.

She said these targets form part of Pakistan's broader national fiberization strategy aimed at strengthening connectivity,

expanding broadband access, and enabling digital transformation across sectors.

The minister said the government, under the direction of the Prime Minister, has removed Right of Way (RoW) charges to facilitate fiber deployment across the country. She said the policy shift is designed to make fiberization more attractive for private sector investment and accelerate infrastructure rollout.

"This has made fiberization business-friendly and investment-ready, allowing the private sector to take a leading role," she said.

Govt forms committee to curb animal cruelty, tighten legal framework



PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination Dr. Musadik Malik on Wednesday chaired the first meeting of a newly constituted committee tasked with addressing animal cruelty and strengthening wildlife protection laws across the country.

Formed on the directions of the prime minister, the Committee on Cruelty to Animals has been mandated to develop a comprehensive framework for animal welfare, assess the prevalence of abuse, and rec-

ommend preventive and enforcement measures.

Officials told the meeting that Pakistan faces multiple structural challenges in protecting animals, including weak coordination among institutions, overlapping departmental mandates, insufficient veterinary infrastructure, and limited enforcement of existing laws. Participants also highlighted low penalties for animal cruelty, lack of a centralised monitoring system, and resource constraints as key impediments. The committee was briefed that Pakistan remains vulnerable to illegal wildlife trafficking, with species such as falcons, freshwater turtles, big cats, crocodiles, birds and primates reportedly smuggled through organised networks. The meeting noted that the Capital Development Authority and Metropolitan Corporation Islamabad have initiated a TNVR (track, neuter, vaccinate and release) programme in various sectors of the capital to manage stray dog populations humanely.

Interpol has issued red notices for property tycoon Malik Riaz, his son: NAB chief

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Interpol has issued Red Notices against Bahria Town owner Malik Riaz and his son Ali Riaz, National Accountability Bureau (NAB) Chairman Lt General (retired) Nazir Ahmed said on Wednesday. A red notice is a request to law enforcement agencies by Interpol to locate and provisionally arrest a person pending extradition, surrender, or similar legal action. The NAB chairman made the remarks during a press briefing at the accountability watchdog's headquarters. "Today I am giving you breaking news that Interpol has issued a red notice against Malik Riaz and Ali Riaz," he said at the conclusion of the briefing. This could not be independently verified through Interpol. Riaz, 72, is the founder and chairman of Bahria Town, while his 48-year-old son serves as chief executive. The property tycoon is currently residing in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), where he has launched a multi-billion-dollar housing project. During the press.

PARC achieves milestone in commercializing seed research

PEAK POINT



ISLAMABAD: In a historic and landmark development for Pakistan's seed sector, "PATCO Seeds," an initiative of the Pakistan Agricultural Research Council (PARC), has successfully secured approval as a seed business enterprise from the National Seed Development and Regulatory Authority (NSDRA).

This milestone marks a significant step forward in strengthening Pakistan's seed industry and enhancing the availability of high-quality seeds for farmers across the country, said a press release issued by the Ministry of National Food Security and Research on Wednesday. Minister for National Food Security and Research, Rana Tanveer Hussain,

has demonstrated strong leadership and unwavering commitment to modernizing Pakistan's agriculture sector, particularly the seed industry, through innovation, regulatory reforms, and enhanced private sector engagement. The Federal Minister stated that the approval of PATCO Seeds as a seed business enterprise is a major step toward transforming Pakistan's agriculture into a modern, resilient, and competitive sector. He emphasized that the government.

SDPI, NIDM to conduct joint research on climate modeling, DRR



PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) and National Institute of Disaster Management (NIDM) signed a Letter of Agreement (LoA) to promote joint research initiatives in the realm of disaster risk reduction, climate disaster prediction models and anticipatory actions aimed at institutional collaboration and strengthening national disaster management capacity through research, training, and knowledge sharing. The signing ceremony was held at National Disaster Management Authority

here on Wednesday. SDPI Executive Director Dr. Abid Qaiyum Suleri and NIDM Executive Director Air Commodore (ret) Tanveer Piracha signed the agreement. Speaking on the occasion, Lt-Gen. Inam Haider Malik, the Chairman of National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), said the intensity and exposure of disasters are widening with every passing year, therefore, the NDMA is introducing innovative disaster risk reduction interventions, which would be provided at grass roots level throughout the year. He said the NDMA has connected global think tanks, international non-governmental organizations to make synergized disaster resilience efforts and concerted efforts are going on to integrate more technology for innovative solutions. He also briefed the participants on the Authority's initiatives, including technical innovation leading to National Emergencies Operation Center as well as complete disaster projections at regional and global level with promising accuracy.

Pakistan, Tajikistan agree to advance trade, transit Cooperation, explore new Corridor mechanisms

PEAK POINT



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan on Tuesday held a meeting with Tajikistan Ambassador, Sharifzoda Yusuf Toir to discuss measures for enhancing bilateral trade, strengthening transit connectivity, and deepening institutional cooperation between Pakistan and Tajikistan.

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The Federal Minister for Commerce emphasized that Pakistan was committed to facilitating regional trade through improved logistics, diversified

transit routes, and closer coordination with partner countries, said a release issued here on Wednesday. He noted that timely completion of internal procedures under transit frameworks, including QTTA arrangements, was essential to operationalize existing mechanisms and move forward on future cooperation. The Minister underlined the importance of developing.

Pakistan's Young Envoys Shine in Türkiye with Cultural Excellence

PEAK POINT

ANKARA: A Meeting with President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Students of Pakistan's Maarif International Schools & Colleges brought pride to Pakistan by representing the country at two prestigious international events held in Türkiye during April 2026, promoting Pakistan's culture, heritage, and youthful talent on global platforms. Students from Lahore Dream Garden Campus and Lahore Asifa Irfan Campus participated in the International Bread Festival held from 18-25 April 2026 in Istanbul. The event gathered delegations



from numerous countries to celebrate peace, unity, and friendship through cultural exchange. During the festival, the students also took part in an official protocol visit to the Governor's House, where they proudly presented souvenirs on behalf of Pakistan and Pakistan's Maarif International

Schools & Colleges to the Governor as a gesture of goodwill and friendship. Adding a special taste of Pakistan to the event, the students also prepared traditional Pakistani naan bread during their stay in Türkiye, which was warmly appreciated and enjoyed by participants and guests from dif-

ferent countries. Meanwhile, students from Islamabad Chak Shahzad Campus and Islamabad G-10 Campus represented Pakistan at the 48th International 23rd April Children's Festival organized by TRT from April 2026 in Ankara. At the grand festival, Pak-Turk

Maarif students captivated the international audience with a vibrant cultural performance on Pakistan's national song "Ae Mere Watan." Their energetic and graceful presentation beautifully reflected the spirit, colours, and patriotic pride of Pakistan, earning admiration from spectators and

participants alike. During the celebrations, the participating students also had the honour of meeting President of Türkiye Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, making the occasion even more memorable and historic for the young ambassadors of Pakistan. The International 23rd April Children's Festival is globally recognized for bringing together children from different nations to celebrate peace, friendship, and cultural harmony. Participation in such a renowned event provided students with an excellent opportunity to showcase Pakistan's rich traditions on an international stage.