



Finance minister discusses budget preparations with visiting IMF mission



Maritime Minister reviews ports' readiness, pushes for regional transshipment hub



Pakistan, China shaping digital economic future: Haroon Akhtar

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PM Shehbaz directs steps for SMEs, women entrepreneurs' access to easy loans

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday directed that the commercial banks take steps to ensure the access of women entrepreneurs and small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to easy loans, besides assisting them in exporting their products.

The prime minister, chairing a review meeting here regarding government measures for the uplift of SMEs, said that the SMEs held full potential for the development of the national economy and increasing the exports.

He said it was encouraging that Special Assistant to PM for Industries and Production, Haroon Akhtar Khan and his SMEDA team were working on an emergency basis to provide easy credit, digital financ-

ing, inclusion in the formal economy, and access to export markets for SMEs.

He expressed satisfaction with the roadmap prepared by SMEDA and the Ministry of Industries, directing to present an implementation plan with achievable targets within a specified time frame.

He directed that processing sectors in agriculture be given the status of SMEs and also welcomed the steps taken for the inclusion of women in small and medium industries.

During the briefing by SMEDA, the Ministry of Industries and Production, and the State Bank of Pakistan, it was informed that 48 initiatives were being implemented in eight strategic sectors for the development.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting regarding the development of Small and Medium Enterprise sector.

Khawaja Asif says KP now on 'same page' as Centre in fight against terrorism

PEAK POINT



ISLAMABAD: Defence Minister Khawaja Asif on Wednesday acknowledged that the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government was standing firmly with the Centre in combating terrorism, hailing that they were on the "same page".

He made the remarks on the floor of the National Assembly while responding to an emotionally charged speech by Jamiat Ulama-i-Islam-Fazl's (JUI-F) Noor Alam Khan, who had criticised both the federal and provincial governments for rising terrorism in the province.

"We did not have the KP government's cooperation for a very long time, [but] now we have [it]. They are standing firmly with the Centre and the armed forces against terrorism. There is no doubt," Asif declared.

"It is a good thing that we are all on the same page," he added. The defence minister said, "I agree with them that a solution to this issue is needed, but it is not the centre's responsibility; it is partially, but all provinces have to contribute to this with their resources."

Trump arrives in Beijing for high-stakes meeting with Chinese President Xi

PEAK POINT



NEW YORK: United States President Donald Trump arrived in Beijing on Wednesday for meetings with Chinese President Xi Jinping.

Beginning the first visit to China by a US president in nearly a decade, Trump touched down on Air Force One at Beijing Capital International Airport at 7:50pm (4:50pm PKT) after the long flight from Washington.

Ructions over Iran, trade and Taiwan loom over the highly anticipated meeting between the leaders of the world's largest economies, which Trump had already delayed from March because of the war in the Middle East. But Trump appeared firmly focused on business deals, with Nvidia chief Jensen Huang boarding the plane at the last minute in Alaska and Tesla's Elon Musk also travelling on the presidential jet.

Trump was welcomed by Chinese dignitaries, a tightly choreographed formation of military honour guard and dozens of Chinese students waving US and Chinese flags as he disembarked Air Force One in the waning hours of twilight.

Pausing midway down the red carpet as the students chanted "welcome, welcome, warm welcome" in Mandarin, he punched the air and smiled broadly before departing in his limousine.

A White House official account said that tomorrow, Trump "will participate in the official state arrival ceremony, meet with President Xi Jinping, sit for multiple interviews, and hold several."

Army officer among five soldiers martyred, 7 terrorists killed in Balochistan operation

PEAK POINT



RAWALPINDI: Security forces have neutralised seven India-sponsored militants while five security personnel, including an army major, were martyred during a sanitisation operation in Balochistan's Barkhan district, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said on Wednesday.

The military's media wing said Pakistan Army and Frontier Corps Balochistan personnel commenced a sanitisation operation in Barkhan's Nosham area on the morning of May 13 to eliminate terrorists of India-backed Fina al-Hindustan.

During the operation, a group of terrorists was located and engaged by troops, it said, adding that seven terrorists were killed in an exchange of fire.

"Weapons, ammunition and explosives were also recovered from the killed terrorists."

However, during intense fire exchange, five brave sons of soil, including a field officer, met the ultimate sacrifice and embraced martyrdom, the military's media wing said.

Karachi court grants 3-day physical remand of 'drug peddler' Pinky: police

PEAK POINT

KARACHI: A local court in Karachi on Wednesday approved a three-day physical remand of a high-profile woman "drug peddler", Anmol alias Pinky, in a case registered by Karachi South Police. The police approached the court a day after a request for her physical remand was rejected. The suspect had earlier been sent to jail on judicial remand. The investigating officer had cited three main grounds in the remand report: identifying the source of cocaine supply, determining her financial resources, and conducting a Criminal.

Building Digital Silk Road: DPM Dar launches IBI Pakistan Digital Economy HQ

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Ishaq Dar on Wednesday launched the IBI Pakistan Digital Economy Headquarters here, describing it as a powerful symbol of the enduring Pakistan-China partnership and a new chapter of digital collaboration.

The deputy prime minister, in his keynote address at the launching ceremony, said that the launch of IBI headquarters marked a transformative milestone in the Pakistan-China All-Weather Strategic Partnership. Highlighting Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's vision to establish Pakistan as a regional hub for digital



innovation, he said that Pakistan-China partnership was transitioning from physical infrastructure, such as the Karakoram Highway and CPEC energy projects, toward "intelligent infrastructure," AI, ICT, and digital connectivity. "Today, we are moving from roads to networks, from physical infrastructure to digital architecture... We are building a digital Silk Road today, beginning with

the launch of the IBI headquarters in Islamabad," the deputy prime minister said. He told the gathering that under CPEC 2.0, cooperation was expanding beyond traditional sectors into digital transformation, smart cities, and climate resilience.

Sharing optimistic economic indicators including a fall in inflation, rising GDP and a dive in the policy interest, he reaffirmed the government's commitment to returning Pakistan to the roadmap of becoming a top-20 global economy.

With the world's fifth-largest population and a rapidly growing youth demographic, Deputy Prime Minister Dar emphasized that Pakistan was no longer "waiting for its moment" but has reached a stage of immense IT potential and global competitiveness. He welcomed Beijing United Information Technology (IBI) to Pakistan, noting that its platform—serving millions of enterprises across 100 industrial sectors in China—reflected strong international confidence in Pakistan's economy.

Imran Khan loses vision in one eye, claims PTI leader

PEAK POINT



ISLAMABAD: PTI Secretary General Salman Akram Raja on Wednesday claimed that the party founder, Imran Khan, had lost the vision in his one eye due to alleged torture in prison and faced serious health risks in custody. "Today, all doors of justice appear closed," Raja told reporters outside the Supreme Court in Islamabad, alleging that the PTI founder had been imprisoned for 1,000 days and was being denied basic constitutional rights.

The claim comes days after Khan was administered a fourth intravitreal eye injection at the Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (Pims) on April 28 as part of his ongoing follow-up treatment.

The jailed PTI founder was diagnosed with central retinal vein occlusion (CRVO), a serious eye condition, according to a report submitted to the Supreme Court by his lawyer and the court's amicus curiae, Salman Safdar.

The condition occurs when the main vein draining blood from the retina becomes blocked and is often associated with cardiovascular risk factors such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes and heart disease.



SPORTS



Ayesha Zafar sets multiple records with century against Zimbabwe in first T20I



PEAK POINT KARACHI: Top-order batter Ayesha Zafar scored a record-breaking unbeaten century for Pakistan against Zimbabwe in the opening T20I at National Bank Stadium, Karachi, on Tuesday. Ayesha, who walked out to bat at No.3 with the scoreboard reading 23/1 in 1.5 overs, launched an all-out attack on the Zimbabwean bowlers and went on to register her maiden century on the final delivery of the innings by smashing Nomvelo Sibanda for a four

towards the mid-wicket region. The top-order batter made 102 not out off just 47 deliveries, smashing 15 fours and two sixes during her monumental knock, which powered Pakistan to a mammoth total of 237/5 in the ongoing fixture, which was their highest in the format, surpassing the previous best of 181/4, which they achieved against South Africa in 2024. As a result, Ayesha became only the second batter to score a century for Pakistan in Women's T20Is, joining teammate Muneeba Ali, who has achieved the feat twice. Ayesha's score of 102 not out was also the joint-highest ever achieved by a Pakistani batter in the format, drawing level with Muneeba. Players to score century for Pakistan in Women's T20Is

Muneeba Ali - 102 against Ireland in 2023	Muneeba Ali - 100 not out against Ireland in 2025
Ayesha Zafar - 102 not out against Zimbabwe in 2026	Furthermore, Ayesha's maiden

Cricket legend Shahid Afridi conferred Hilal-e-Imtiaz

PEAK POINT ISLAMABAD: Former Pakistan captain and all-rounder Shahid Afridi has been conferred Hilal-e-Imtiaz, the country's second-highest civilian award, in recognition his outstanding services in the field of sports. The award was conferred by President Asif Ali Zardari during a prestigious ceremony held at Aiwan-e-Sadr. Afridi was recognised for guiding Pakistan to their historic 2009 T20 World Cup triumph. The honour also acknowledged Afridi's contributions to England's county cricket and his leadership role in the World Championship of Legends. After receiving the award, Afridi wrote on X that receiving the Tamgha-e-Imtiaz from the president is an honour for him, adding that it represents not only his achievement but that of the entire Pakistani nation.



KCL event to start on Aug 14 in Peshawar

PEAK POINT PESHAWAR: In a welcoming news for cricket fans in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa the Pakistan Cricket Board has officially approved the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Champions League (KCL), a move expected to promote cricket activities across the province. According to official sources on Wednesday, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Champions League will begin on August 14 in connection with Independence Day celebrations.

PSB, EFP break ground for Riding Club at Pakistan Sports Complex



PEAK POINT ISLAMABAD: Outgoing Director General of the Pakistan Sports Board (PSB) Muhammad Yasir Pirzada on Wednesday performed the ground-breaking of the Riding Club at the Pakistan Sports Complex, terming it a watershed moment in the promotion of equestrian sports and

nurturing athletes in the country. Speaking on the occasion, he said the initiative would provide young riders with modern training facilities and create new opportunities for talent development in equestrian sports. "The Pakistan Sports Board remains committed to facilitating national federations in developing infrastructure and nurturing athletes capable of representing Pakistan at the international level," he said. Pirzada also appreciated the efforts of the federation for promoting horse-riding culture and expanding participation in Olympic equestrian disciplines across the country. Meanwhile, newly-elected President of the

Kinnaird College claim Lahore Intersarsity League Cricket title



Pakistani women complete first step toward becoming international sailing judges

PEAK POINT ISLAMABAD: Two Pakistani women have achieved a historic milestone in sailing after successfully completing the first stage toward becoming international sailing judges for the first time. Zoya Asad Ali and Mehnaz Jamil represented Pakistan at the World Sailing International Seminar held in Thailand, where both participants passed the examination with notable scores following the completion of the course. This marks the first occasion that Pakistani women have completed the judges' course in the sport of sailing. Both sailors are associated with the Pakistan Air Force Yacht Club. To achieve full international judge status, the two sailors must now officiate in three international sailing events over the next

four years. Their performances during those events will be assessed before final certification is awarded. Arshad qualified as an international sailing judge and currently serves as an international race officer.



Pakistan has previously had only a few international sailing judges. In the 1980s, the late Captain Zakaullah Chaudhry and retired Khalid Mahmood Akhtar served as international judges in the sport. Later, in 1996, Captain Zoya Asad Ali is also the granddaughter of Captain Arshad. The achievement has been seen as an important step forward for women's participation in sailing and international sports officiating in Pakistan.

Shaukat Khanum hosts Women's Cricket Tournament





Islamabad crime, abductions and illegal hostels come under scrutiny as safe city performance questioned

NADEEM TANOLI
ISLAMABAD: The law and order situation in Islamabad Capital Territory came under serious scrutiny after lawmakers raised concerns over reported abduction cases, rising crime incidents, illegal hostels and guest houses in residential sectors, food safety enforcement failures, and security gaps in the federal capital. The Standing Committee on Interior and Narcotics Control reviewed the performance of the Safe City Project and directed authorities to submit reports and take strict action against violations affecting public safety and urban order. The committee discussed report-

ed abduction cases in Islamabad and examined whether the Safe City Project is delivering effective monitoring, surveillance and crime prevention in the federal capital. The Minister of State for Interior informed the committee that although crime incidents have increased, Islamabad's overall crime statistics remain comparatively better than other areas. The committee was invited to visit the Safe City Project for a detailed briefing. The discussion reflected growing concern over whether Islamabad's surveillance and policing system is strong enough to respond to public safety

threats, especially amid reports of abductions and other crimes. The murder case of Mr. Amir Awan in Islamabad Capital Territory was also taken up during the meeting. The chairman stressed that bail should not be granted to the accused persons, indicating the committee's serious concern over violent crime and prosecution matters in the capital. The committee also reviewed the case of alleged drug peddler Anmol Pinky and directed the Anti-Narcotics Force to interrogate the accused regarding narcotics suppliers and recipients. This direction focused on drug networks operating

in or linked with Islamabad and the need to trace both supply sources and beneficiaries. Illegal hostels and guest houses operating in Islamabad's residential sectors also came under discussion. The committee urged Islamabad Traffic Police and relevant authorities to take strict action against such establishments, which members viewed as a growing administrative and security concern in residential areas. The chairman directed authorities to submit a detailed report on action taken against illegal hostels and guest houses in the next meeting. The directive signals that enforcement agencies

will be expected to explain what steps have been taken to regulate residential-sector violations and protect citizens from security and traffic-related problems. The Islamabad Capital Territory Food Safety Amendment Bill was also discussed. The committee observed that weak implementation of laws is damaging food quality assurance standards. After being informed that the subject falls under the domain of another ministry, the chairman directed that the bill be referred to the relevant standing committee. The Islamabad Real Estate Regulation and Development Amendment Bill was approved after

detailed deliberations. The bill is expected to strengthen regulation of the real estate sector in the capital, where property development, consumer protection and enforcement issues remain important public concerns. The Islamabad Capital Territory Waterside Safety Bill was also discussed, but concerns were raised over the committee's mandate to consider it after the lapse of the stipulated time under Senate rules. It was noted that delays in Senate elections had contributed to the delay in taking up the matter. The chairman deferred the bill until the relevant rule position is obtained.

Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq chairs meeting on digitalization and AI-Enabled Parliament

PEAK POINT
ISLAMABAD: Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq chaired an important meeting regarding the digitalization of parliamentary affairs and the introduction of an AI-enabled working environment at Parliament House, Islamabad. Speaker Provincial Assembly of Balochistan Capt (R) Abdul Khaliq Khan Achakzai, Members of the National Assembly Gul Asghar Khan,

Syed Amin Ul Haq, Ms. Shaista Pervaiz, Syeda Anna Batool, senior officers of the National Assembly Secretariat, representatives from the IT Department of the National Assembly, and officials from NITB were also present in the meeting. During the meeting, detailed discussions were held on transforming parliamentary operations into a modern, efficient, and paperless system through the use of advanced digital technologies

and Artificial Intelligence (AI). Addressing the participants, the Speaker emphasized that digitalization of parliamentary procedures is the need of the hour and a key step toward improving institutional efficiency, transparency, and governance. He stated that the transition towards a paperless Parliament would not only enhance the efficiency of parliamentary business but would also significantly reduce expenditure from the

national exchequer by minimizing paper usage and administrative costs. The Speaker informed the meeting that iPads had already been provided to all Members of the National Assembly to facilitate digital access to parliamentary business, legislative documents, agendas, notices, and other official records. He further stated that, in the near future, the entire business of the House would be conducted through digital devices, enabling

members to access all parliamentary proceedings and documents electronically. During the briefing, representatives of NITB and the IT Department informed the Speaker that indigenous AI-enabled applications and digital programs had been developed to streamline parliamentary functions and improve operational efficiency within the National Assembly Secretariat. They highlighted that these locally developed technological solutions

would assist in digitized documentation, smart data management, automated processes, and enhanced coordination among parliamentary departments. The Speaker appreciated the efforts of the IT teams and NITB officials for developing indigenous technological solutions and directed the concerned departments to accelerate the implementation process to ensure timely transition toward a fully digital and AI-enabled Parliament.

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Disappearing migrants

Mainstream coverage of environmental degradation often limits itself to issues that directly impact the human population, such as climate change and plastic pollution. We worry about the intensifying heat and the effects of plastic waste on our environment, but neglect the overarching effects of our own behaviours on the animal kingdom. Migratory birds have long been an important part of Pakistan's ecosystem, but in recent decades, their population has been facing a slow and painful decline. And while it is true that the preservation of our ecosystem ultimately benefits ourselves, we also have a responsibility towards nature that extends beyond human advantages. For decades, hundreds of thousands of birds have made their annual trip to Pakistan from Serbia through the international migration route known as the Indus Flyway during harsh winter seasons. Now, with a flagrant increase in pollution, illegal trade and excessive hunting, these birds are facing population loss. During the early 2000s, what used to be a regular migration of around one million birds has now declined to about 500,000 to 700,000 birds. This tragic decline is the direct result of both harmful human activities and governmental neglect. Haleji Lake is considered one of Asia's largest bird sanctuaries, but since Karachi's water supply source was shifted from Haleji to Keenjhar Lake,

The power of trust

Tariq Khosa
THE Human Rights Commission of Pakistan has painted a grim picture of the state of human rights in the country in its latest annual report. In a press release, the organisation pointed out "a severe contraction of civic space, the erosion of judicial independence, and deepening insecurity" in 2025. This is akin to a civil-society charge sheet against state institutions. The report mentions how the "Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances (COIED) registered 273 new cases [of missing persons] nationwide". While 13 were traced to state agencies' centres, 32 to prisons, and some individuals returned, many other individuals remained missing. Harsh legal and institutional mechanisms created a climate of fear and self-censorship while limiting public discourse. Amendments to the Anti-Terrorism Act, 1997, at the centre and in Balochistan, empowered LEAs to detain any citizen for up to three months without charge or judicial oversight, further undermining fundamental rights, due process and protection from arbitrary detentions.

On World Press Freedom Day, the prime minister expressed his government's commitment to protecting the freedom of the press while also stressing the importance of "credible journalism". The president said, "A free, independent and diverse media is

not a threat to a confident nation, rather a proof of one." Meanwhile, media bodies and civil society organisations raised alarm over growing curbs on press freedom and the rising risks to journalists. Freedom Network cited the weaponisation of cybercrime laws as one of the most serious threats to media freedom in Pakistan. From April 2025 to March 2026, "at least 129 verified incidents of violations" were reported and included: "two murders, five cases of threat to murder, 58 legal cases (mostly Peca-invoked), 16 cases of assault, 11 cases of threats to harm and two cases of kidnappings".

Separately, civil society representatives issued an open letter to the PM, warning that "Pakistan's media landscape was increasingly marked by intimidation, legal pressure and economic vulnerability". While stressing the need for an independent media committed to truthful reporting and accountability, they highlighted a growing pattern of harassment under cybercrime and anti-terror laws against journalists and human rights activists. Such persecution "had fostered fear within the media community, leading to self-censorship and limiting public access to critical information".

Ex-senator and president of the PPP human rights cell Farhatullah Babar expressed his views on World Press Day candidly. "Silencing those who speak for rights, justice

and the marginalised is silencing the conscience of society itself. The strength of a democracy lies not in suppressing dissent, but in engaging with it," he said. He also asserted: "Prolonged detentions without trial, delayed hearings, excessive charges and midnight knocks are new tools of coercion ... Such practices violate constitutional guarantees under Articles 10-A and 19 ..."

It is all about reaching out and being honest with one another in spite of existing differences.

Another report by the Pakistan Press Foundation said that Pakistani journalism was "dealing with overly active forms of legal challenges — from criminal complaints to summons, the continuation of violent physical attacks coupled with threats of violence, digital threats and harassment online, further amplified in an age of artificial intelligence". It outlined the full scope of repressive actions the media was subjected to. In a bold May 3 editorial on press freedoms, this paper stated that the entire industry was being "suffocated by the repressive actions of the state that has gradually come untethered from law and principle". It warned that "a public that abandons its press abandons its last organised defence against the unchecked ambitions of power". Our biggest concern revolves around the results of choices made by those in power.

Courtesy Dawn

Before the roof comes off

Anna Hashmi
I recently read a piece in this very op-ed section that caught my attention. Someone wrote about the assassination attempts on Donald Trump. Not the attempts themselves, but the silence around them. The mainstream media's silence. Trump's own silence. The lack of comment from the whole political and media establishment that would have occupied months of airtime in other circumstances. His point was straightforward: the quiet is stranger than the shots.

I've been thinking about reactor number four ever since.

On the night of April 26, 1986, operators at Chernobyl watched instruments behave in ways the manual said were impossible. They continued with the test anyway. The explosion took place and officials classified it as a minor accident. Firefighters arrived on the scene but they were not wearing radiation suits. For 36 hours, people in Pripyat lived as they were accustomed to, and the air around them slowly poisoned them.

Years later, Mikhail Gorbachev, the leader of the USSR, would suggest that Chernobyl, more than any Western pressure campaign, exposed the deeper weakness of the Soviet system: the increasing gap between official reality and reality itself.

Hannah Arendt called it the banality of evil. Not monsters. People at their desks doing what they're supposed to do, but not asking questions. The agent from the FBI who closes the file. The person who edits the story in the editor's chair. The person who sends it to the weather. No one wants to be covering anything up. They each, individually, decide not to look.

Now consider the past few years in America. A number of major security incidents involving a former and current President, armed individuals around sensitive political events and places, have generated little sustained public attention.

Courtesy Tribune

President confers Pakistan's civil awards on recipients from various fields



PEAK POINT
ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari on Wednesday conferred Pakistan's civil awards on various personalities including the Pakistani nationals and foreigners in recognition of their outstanding services in various fields. The investiture ceremony was held at the Awwan e Sadr in which different personalities were decorated with the civil awards in recognition of their services in health, education, literature, journalism, public, research, diplomatic matters, sports and economy. The ceremony was attended by First Lady Aseefa Bhutto, the federal ministers, Chairman Senate, parliamentarians, members of the civil society, diplomats, media and a large number of people.

Nishan-i-Imtiaz (posthumous) was conferred upon late Nawabzada Nasrullah Khan, and Irfan ul Haq Siddiqui in recognition of their outstanding services to the country. Islamabad: 13 May 2026 — President Asif Ali Zardari confers Sitara-i-Shuja'at upon the family of Shaheed Liaqat Ali, a former Pakistan Railways employee who embraced martyrdom while foiling a suicide attack in Attock. The other recipients who were conferred upon with awards in different categories included, Attaul Haq Qasmi Nishan-i-Imtiaz, Shahid Khan Afridi Hilal-i-Imtiaz, Sardar Awais Ahmed Khan Leghari Hilal-i-Imtiaz, Muhammad Ali Hilal-i-Imtiaz, Asghar Nadeem Syed Hilal-i-Imtiaz, late Senator Taj Haider (posthumous)

Sitara-i-Pakistan, Moazzam Jah Ansari Hilal-i-Imtiaz, Engineer Jamaluddin Ahmed Hilal-i-Imtiaz, Mirza Rizwan Baig Hilal-i-Imtiaz, Muhammad Yousuf Khan Hilal-i-Imtiaz, Dr Ameer Muhammad Hilal-i-Imtiaz, Professor Dr Ikrum ul Haq Hilal-i-Imtiaz, Zahra Majid Ali Hilal-i-Imtiaz, Shehroz Kashif Hilal-i-Imtiaz, Late Malik Ata Muhammad Khan Hilal-i-Imtiaz (posthumous), Ehtesham ul Haq Hilal-i-Imtiaz, Azeem uddin Hilal-i-Imtiaz, Bahrain's diplomat Mohammad Ebrahim Mohammad Abdul Qadir, Javed Ullah Khan Mehsood Sitara-i-Shujaat (posthumous), Nawab Ali Shaheed Sitara-i-Shujaat (posthumous), Senator Hidayatullah Sitara-i-Shujaat (posthumous).

Indian arrogance shot down alongside planes during last year's military conflict, Tarar says

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Information Minister Attaullah Tarar said on Wednesday that the Indian aircraft shot down during the brief military conflict in May last year "brought down Indian arrogance with them".



He made these remarks while addressing a ceremony held in relevance to Marka-i-Haq at Islamabad's Institute of Strategic Studies. The conflict with India — starting from the April 22 Pahalgam attack to the end of Operation Bunyanum Marsoos with a ceasefire between the two countries on May 10 — has been called "Marka-i-Haq" (Battle of Truth) by the state. During the conflict, New Delhi launched deadly air strikes in Punjab and Azad Kashmir on May 7. Pakistan retaliated by downing several Indian planes in air-to-air

combat. The initial tally of the downed jets was announced as five and later raised to eight. In his fresh remarks on the matter, Tarar said: "When those eight planes went down — and a lot of them were Rafale planes, which are a source of pride for India — those planes brought down with them the Indian arrogance; and proved to the world, once again, our dominance in aerial battle; and how Pakistan's indigenous technology helped it achieve victory." He also said that the Pakistan Navy was "alert and ready" to respond to any aggression.

Finance minister discusses budget preparations with visiting IMF mission



PEAK POINT
ISLAMABAD: Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb on Wednesday discussed preparations for the upcoming federal budget and the country's broader reform agenda with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) visiting Islamabad, the finance ministry said.

He briefed the delegation on the country's macroeconomic outlook, fiscal strategy, reform priorities, and the government's ongoing efforts to ensure sustainable economic stability and long-term growth, the ministry said on the social media platform X.

The ministry said that the discussions focused on the country's "macroeconomic stabilisation efforts, preparations for the upcoming federal budget, and the broader reform agenda aimed at strengthening fiscal and external sustainability while fostering sustain-

able economic growth". "Both sides exchanged views on maintaining reform momentum, preserving macroeconomic stability, and advancing structural reforms to promote investment, productivity, and export-led growth within a balanced and forward-looking policy framework," the ministry said. Welcoming the IMF delegation to Islamabad, the finance minister "appreciated the Fund's continued engagement and constructive dialogue" with the government, it said, adding Aurangzeb particularly acknowledged the productive discussions initiated during the spring meetings held in Washington earlier this year. The ministry added that Aurangzeb shared encouraging developments regarding the country's external sector, highlighting positive trends in remittances and export performance.

"He noted that recent data indicated improvement in exports on both a month-on-month and a year-on-year basis, reflecting growing resilience in the economy and a gradual strengthening of macroeconomic fundamentals," it said. Further, the finance minister emphasised that while economic stabilisation efforts had produced encouraging results, the government remained fully mindful of the structural challenges confronting.

Pakistan, China shaping digital economic future: Haroon Akhtar

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) on Industries and Production Haroon Akhtar Khan said Wednesday that Pakistan and China are jointly shaping the region's digital and economic future through innovation, technology and long-term strategic cooperation.

Speaking at the inauguration of the IBI Pakistan Digital Economy Headquarters, he said the two countries' relationship is based on trust, consistency and a shared vision for regional development and prosperity.

The SAPM said the global economy is rapidly changing and countries that fail to adopt digitalisation risk being left behind.

He said Pakistan is entering a new industrial era driven by artificial intelligence, e-commerce, automation and digital connectivity, with the government focused on modernizing industry and strengthening technological infrastructure.

The special assistant said Pakistan's ongoing transformation reflects "focused leadership, relentless efforts and strategic clarity" under Prime Minister.

Maritime Minister reviews ports' readiness, pushes for regional transshipment hub

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chaudhry chaired a high-level meeting to assess ports' preparedness amid the evolving regional situation and devise strategies to position Pakistani ports as a premier regional transit and transshipment hub.



The meeting brought together major stakeholders, including shipping lines and terminal operators, to ensure seamless maritime trade, boost operational efficiency, enhance feeder connectivity, and streamline business procedures, says a press release received here on Wednesday. Discussions covered regulatory challenges, digitization, stake-

holder coordination, and opportunities to attract regional cargo, with emphasis on promoting Karachi as a reliable maritime gateway. Minister Junaid Chaudhry stated that the government is implementing practical measures to transform Pakistani ports into a key regional transshipment center, adopting a coordinated stakeholder approach. He stressed expanding port capacity, fortifying logistics networks, and promoting feeder services.

JTC to be convened on 19th and 20th May



PEAK POINT
ISLAMABAD: Had a fruitful meeting with Mr. Robert Ng'ong'a, Head of Bilateral, International Trade Directorate, Mr. Boru D. Roba of the Asia Division and Ms. Fatuma Bonayia, all from the State Department of Trade, Ministry of Investments, Trade and Industry, ahead of the 2nd session of the Joint Trade Committee (JTC) that will be held in

Islamabad on the 19th and 20th May 2026. This was in preparation for the just to happen JTC, where the agenda was discussed keenly. Also, the current status of the pending MoUs between the state agencies of the two countries was identified. Pakistani Visa Facilitation by the High Commission was promised to the visiting delegates. Wished the state officers a nice stay in Pakistan and looking forward to a successful JTC meeting between the two governments.

Protest held against Acting Chairman Bannu Educational Board

PEAK POINT

BANNU: Employees of the Bannu Educational Board staged a strong protest against Acting Chairman Intiaz Ayub, leveling serious allegations against him including financial irregularities, misuse of authority, and alleged corruption in the examination system. The protesters also threatened to halt board examinations and refuse marking of papers. The protest was led by Employees' Union leader Samiullah Durrani along with other staff members. Leaders of the Private Schools Association and a large number of students also participated. Addressing the demonstration, Bannu Board Employees Association President Samiullah Durrani, PEN President Irfan Khan, and other



speakers alleged that Acting Chairman Intiaz Ayub—who is also serving simultaneously as Chairman of the Kohat Educational Board—has turned the Bannu Board into a hub of "corruption and mismanagement." They claimed that appointments of superintendents, deputy superintendents, and invigilators for examinations involved alleged transactions of large sums of money, with a specific individual being used as a "tout" to facilitate the process.

China Window's special Pashto song marking 75 years of Pak-China friendship to launch on May 20

PEAK POINT

PESHAWAR: The Chinese cultural center China Window, based in Peshawar, has produced a Pashto song to mark the 75th anniversary of friendship between Pakistan and the People's Republic of China. The song has been written by renowned poet Professor Dr. Abaseen Yousafzai, whose beautiful poetry has made this creation truly timeless. Prominent journalist and Administrator of China Window, Amjad



Aziz Malik, is the director of the song. The music of the song has been composed by renowned musician Gohar Jan from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The song has been beautifully sung by internationally acclaimed

singers from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Dr. Irfan Khalil and Yamsa Noor, whose voices have added depth and charm to the composition. The video of the song was filmed at the historic site of Takht-i-Bahi, an

important center of the ancient Gandhara civilization that holds great cultural and historical significance in connection with China. In addition, parts of the video were also shot in a more than 142-year-old tradition-

al house located in Peshawar city, symbolizing the continuity and strength of the Pak-China friendship spanning over seven decades. The lyrics of the song are highly poetic and meaningful. In the song, a

girl compares a Pakistani youth to a prince, while the young man describes her as a fairy from China. Both express their emotions and the depth of their mutual bond through beautiful words. The formal launching ceremony of the song will be held on May 20 in Islamabad, where distinguished personalities from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Islamabad, and the Chinese Embassy are expected to participate.