



Tally Chaudhry says Pakistan's ties with UAE 'absolutely fine'



Aqeel rejects impression that possible 28th Amendment would undo 18th



Mohsin Naqvi visits Peshawar Police Headquarters

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PM Shehbaz calls for comprehensive housing reforms, digitalization of sector

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday underscored the urgent need for comprehensive reforms in Pakistan's housing sector as rapid population growth and unplanned urban expansion were increasing pressure on agricultural land and required an effective long-term strategy.

Chairing a high-level review meeting on housing sector reforms here, the prime minister said provision of affordable housing for low-income groups, promotion of low-cost housing schemes, encouragement of private sector participation and improvement in public amenities were among the government's top priorities, a Prime Minister's Office news release said. He directed authorities to dig-

tize and automate all matters related to the housing sector in order to enhance transparency and improve governance.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said bringing the housing sector under a proper regulatory framework was essential to attract overseas investors and ensure sustainable growth in the real estate and development sectors. During the meeting, officials presented various proposals aimed at introducing reforms in the housing sector. Participants were informed that the regulatory framework would be simplified to facilitate credible investors and developers and promote transparency in housing projects. The meeting was briefed that registration with the Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs the progress review meeting on reforms in housing sector.

Chinese FM's remarks to Dar on Iran war 'misrepresented' in some media reports, call held with cordiality: FO

WEEKLY BRIEFING
OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: The Foreign Office on Thursday said certain media reports "misrepresented" Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi's recent remarks to Deputy Prime Minister and FM Ishaq Dar, affirming the call was held with cordiality. The clarification comes after Chinese state media Xinhua reported that during his call with Dar on Tuesday, Wang expressed hope that "Pakistan can step up mediation efforts" between the United States and Iran. Addressing a weekly press briefing, FO spokesperson Tahir Andrabi said: "Some reports suggested that the Chinese side urged us to enhance the mediation efforts, implying as if Pakistan was being asked to sort in a 'do more' paradigm. So news coverage by some of local newspapers conveyed the same impression. "I wish to place on record that such reports somewhat misrepresent the call in both letter and spirit," he added, asserting that the call was held with "traditional warmth and cordiality". Andrabi said FM Wang appreciated "Pakistan's constructive mediation role and expressed full support for its efforts", echoing what was reported by Xinhua as well.

Xi warns Trump Taiwan issue could lead to 'conflict' as US-China summit starts

PEAK POINT



CHINA: Chinese President Xi Jinping warned his US counterpart Donald Trump that the issue of Taiwan could push their two countries into "conflict" if mishandled, a stark opening salvo as a superpower summit set to tackle numerous thorny issues began in Beijing on Thursday.

Trump had arrived in China with accolades for his host, calling Xi a "great leader" and "friend", as he predicted that their countries would have "a fantastic future together".

But beyond the pomp as he welcomed Trump, Xi used less effusive tones, saying the two sides "should be partners and not rivals" and highlighting the issue of self-ruled democratic Taiwan — which Beijing claims as its territory — straight off the bat.

"The Taiwan question is the most important issue in China-US relations," Xi said, according to state broadcaster CCTV.

"If mishandled, the two nations could collide or even come into conflict, pushing the entire China-US relationship into a highly perilous situation."

The trip to Beijing is the first by a US president in nearly a decade, with the grand reception belying a host of unresolved trade and geopolitical tensions between the two countries.

Xi greeted Trump with a red-carpet welcome at the opulent Great Hall of the People, with military band fanfare.

Pakistan successfully test fires Fatah-IV cruise missile: ISPR

PEAK POINT



RAWALPINDI: The Army Rocket Force Command conducted the successful test fire of the indigenously developed Fatah-IV ground-launched cruise missile on Thursday, the military's media affairs wing said.

A statement issued by the Inter-Services Public Relations said that the weapon system was "equipped with advanced avionics and state-of-the-art navigational aids" and "capable of engaging long-range targets with high precision".

"The training fire was conducted to enhance operational efficiency of the troops and validate technical parameters of various sub-systems incorporated for improved accuracy and enhanced survivability," it added.

According to the statement, senior officers of the Pakistan Army Rocket Force Command, along with scientists and engineers of the missile's developing agency, were present during the training fire.

It said that President Asif Ali Zardari, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Chief of Defence Forces and Chief of Army Staff Field Marshal Asim Munir.

Govt orders inquiry into Cambridge exam leaks

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: The interior ministry on Thursday directed the National Cyber Crime Investigation Agency (NCCIA) to investigate, in coordination with Cambridge International Education (CIE), the leaking of the latter's exam papers. According to a handout issued by the interior ministry, the development came as Interior Secretary Muhammad Khurram Agha chaired a high-level meeting regarding the "alleged leakage of Cambridge examination papers" at the Ministry of Interior and Narcotics Control. A day earlier, CIE confirmed the leak of an AS-level.

Tehran calls on BRICS members to condemn US-Israeli aggression on Iran: Iranian FM

PEAK POINT

IRAN: Tehran has called on BRICS members to condemn US and Israeli aggression against Iran, Iranian foreign minister Abbas Araghchi said in a statement upon arriving in New Delhi for a BRICS meeting among foreign ministers. Araghchi said that the West's "false sense of superiority" must be shattered by the Global South. While speaking to Press TV at the BRICS summit, he said the main obstacle to in the Strait of Hormuz was the US blockade, adding that commercial ships needed to cooperate with the Iranian navy for passage in the Strait. US President Donald Trump is expected to ask China to help end the costly and unpopular Iran war in discussions with President Xi Jinping in

Beijing on Thursday, with cost thousands of lives, peace talks stalled and the reshaped alliances in the



global economic cost of the conflict increasing. The US-Israeli war on Iran looms large over Trump's visit to China, the first by a US president since his last trip there in 2017, although analysts say he is unlikely to get the support he wants. More than one month after a tenuous ceasefire took effect, diplomatic efforts have failed to make progress towards resolving a war that has

Middle East and driven up prices of oil and other key commodities around the world.

Washington has called for Tehran to scrap its nuclear programme and lift the chokehold it has placed on the Strait of Hormuz, a key shipping lane through which about 20% of the world's oil and liquefied natural gas travelled before the war began on February 28.

Iran has demanded compensation for war damage, an end to the US blockade of Iranian ports and a halt to fighting on all fronts, including in Lebanon, where Israel is battling Iran-backed Hezbollah. Trump has dismissed Tehran's positions as "garbage."

Read: Iran won't allow US weapons to transit Hormuz Trump's visit to China, which maintains close ties with Tehran and is a major buyer of Iranian oil, comes as the war fuels inflation at home and raises the risk that voters will blame Trump's Republican Party in November's midterm elections. The United States hopes to convince China "to play a more active role in getting Iran to walk away from what they're doing now and trying to do now in the Persian Gulf."

Former Indian army chief backs RSS leader's call for engaging in dialogue with Pakistan



PEAK POINT

NEE DEHLI: Former Indian army chief Gen (retired) Manoj Naravane has supported the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) secretary general's remarks calling for keeping the window for dialogue between Islamabad and New Delhi open.

In an interview with Press Trust of India aired on Tuesday, RSS Secretary General Dattatreya Hosabale said there "should always be a window for dialogue" between Pakistan and India, terming people-to-people contacts as key to breaking the deadlock in ties.

Responding to a query about how India should deal with Pakistan, Hosabale said, "If Pakistan is like a pinprick trying to create incidents like Pulwama.



SPORTS



Mohsin Nawaz becomes first shooting sports athlete to receive Tamgha-e-Imtiaz in Pakistan



PEAK POINT

LAHORE: Pakistan's premier F-Class long-range shooter, Mohsin Nawaz, has become the first athlete from shooting sports to receive the prestigious Tamgha-e-Imtiaz, marking a historic moment for the country's sporting landscape. The award was conferred by Asif Ali Zardari during the Presidential Awards ceremony held in Islamabad on May 13, recognising Mohsin Nawaz's outstanding contributions to long-range shooting and his role in elevating Pakistan's profile in international arena. Speaking after

receiving the award, Nawaz described the honor as a milestone not only for himself but for the entire shooting sports community in Pakistan. He expressed gratitude to his parents, supporters, and coaches, while also dedicating the achievement to young athletes striving for recognition in less-publicized sports. Nawaz also credited the development of Pakistan's shooting sports infrastructure to the patronage of Syed Asim Munir and the establishment of the Pakistan Long Range Rifle Association, which enabled Pakistani shooters to gain recognition through affiliation with the

International Confederation of Fullbore Rifle Associations. Currently preparing for the 2026 F-Class World Championship in the United Kingdom, Nawaz continues to advocate for sports reforms, including improved training facilities and reduced import duties on specialized sporting equipment. His long-term vision, he says, is to ensure future generations of Pakistani shooters receive the opportunities and support needed to compete successfully on the world stage. Widely regarded as Pakistan's most accomplished F-Class long-range shooter, Nawaz has spent more than two decades building a reputation in a discipline that has traditionally received limited institutional support in the country. Born in Faisalabad on August 23, 1986, he began his competitive shooting career in 2004 at the Pakistan Ordnance Factory shooting club in Wah. Over the years, he pursued international competition largely through personal commitment, private sponsorships, and self-funded campaigns while also seeking professional coaching abroad. Nawaz currently holds 10 international individual medals in F-Class long-range shooting, the highest tally achieved by any Pakistani athlete in the sport.

PCB issues NOCs to cricketers for playing abroad



PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has issued NOCs to national cricketers for playing overseas league cricket.

Fast bowlers Hasan Ali, Muhammad Ali, Usman Tariq and Faheem Ashraf have been issued NOCs while fast bowler Muhammad Abbas's NOC has been extended.

Hasan Ali issued NOC to represent Yorkshire County while Mohammad Ali, Usman Tariq and Faheem Ashraf were issued NOCs for Vitality Blast.

Fast bowler Mohammad Abbas' NOC extended to play for Derbyshire.

Mohammad Abbas will return to England at the end of Bangladesh tour.

All-rounder Faheem Ashraf signs with Yorkshire County Cricket Club and Yorkshire County confirmed Faheem Ashraf's contract.

Faheem Ashraf will join Yorkshire in place of Will Sutherland.

Faheem Ashraf will be available for the Vitality Blast group stage and the seventh and eighth rounds of the County Championship.

In this regard, Faheem Ashraf said he is delighted to join Yorkshire.

He said many of my Pakistani players have represented Yorkshire and I have heard a lot of praise from them.

Physical tickets for Pakistan-Australia ODI series to go on sale next week



PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) announced on Thursday that physical ticket sales for the Pakistan-Australia ODI series will begin on May 22.

Online tickets will also go on sale the same day via pcb.tes.com.pk from 1pm onwards.

The ODI series will begin on in Rawalpindi, and Saturday, May 30, three in Islamabad.

with the opening match scheduled at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium. The second and third ODIs will be played at the Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore on June 2 and 4, respectively. All matches will start at 4:30pm local time.

Physical tickets will be available at 16 TCS Express Centres across three cities: eight in Lahore, five in Rawalpindi, and three in Islamabad. The PCB aims to ensure maximum fan attendance by keeping ticket prices affordable across all categories.

General enclosure tickets will be priced at Rs200, first-class enclosures at Rs300, premium tickets at Rs400, and VIP tickets at Rs500. For the Rawalpindi fixture, VIP gallery seats will be available at Rs1,500.

at the Iqbal End (Waqar Younis and Wasim Akram Stands) will cost Rs1,000, while seats at the Jinnah End (Majid Khan and Zaheer Abbas Stands) will cost Rs1,500.

Corporate hospitality packages will also be offered, with details available through the PCB Head Office.

The series marks Australia's return to Pakistan for a 50-over bilateral assignment since their 2022 tour, when the hosts secured a 2-1 series victory.

Earlier this year, Australia also toured Pakistan for a T20I series in January-February, where Pakistan completed a 3-0 clean sweep in Lahore.

Rawalpindi U17 crowned National U17 Cup champions



PEAK POINT

LAHORE: Rawalpindi U17 staged a remarkable comeback to defeat Abbottabad U17 by 125 runs in the final of the National U17 Cup 2025-26 at Iqbal Stadium, Faisalabad, securing the prestigious title and prize money of PKR 1 million. Despite conceding a first-

innings lead of 97 runs, Rawalpindi produced an outstanding all-round performance to turn the match in their favour. Chasing a challenging target of 229, Abbottabad were bowled out for just 103 in 39.5 overs on the third and final day, settling for the runners-up prize money of PKR 500,000.

ures of seven for 42. His brilliant effort earned him the player of the match award. Alyan received excellent support from fellow leg-spinner Azan Ahmed, who grabbed three crucial wickets in Abbottabad's second innings to dismantle the batting line-up. Abbottabad struggled to build partnerships during the chase, with Arsalan Hassan top-scoring with 32 runs. Earlier, Rawalpindi resumed their second innings on the overnight score of 307 for eight and were eventually dismissed for 325 in 81.1 overs. Suleman Khan and Sher Wali Khan played important knocks of 65 and 60 respectively.

Mix martial arts event "STL3" to commence on May 15



PEAK POINT

PESHAWAR: "STL3" was scheduled to commence on May 15, 2026 (today) at Ayub Stadium in Quetta. (sports report by Rehmatullah Khan Nurzai on Thursday said that mega event

of mix martial arts that players of mix martial arts from across the country were going to take part in the mega event of mix martial arts, adding that it was the first time in the history of Balochistan that fights of mix martial arts were held in a cage. He said that sports could be used as a source to bring different nations of the province closer to each other. On the occasion, Secretary General, Pakistan Mix Martial Arts Federation, Osama Mehboob Awan, international MMA champion Nur Muhammad, national MMA champion Sajjad Tarin and others were also present.

PHF to revive women's hockey in Federal Capital

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: In a significant move aimed at the revival and promotion of women's hockey, President of the Pakistan Hockey Federation and Federal Secretary for Inter-Provincial Coordination (IPC), Mohyuddin Ahmad Wani, has entrusted former Deputy Mayor of Islamabad, Syed Zeeshan Naqvi with an important responsibility for the development of women's hockey in the federal capital.

The announcement was made during the closing ceremony of the Shahida Raza Memorial Hockey Tournament held here at the Naseer Bunda Hockey Stadium.

The ceremony was attended by Patron of Islamabad Girls Hockey Academy Ammara Awais and junior men's national teams, the federation is now turning its full attention toward the growth and development of women's hockey.



Niazi, former Deputy Mayor Syed Zeeshan Naqvi, Event Organizing Secretary Riffat Masood, and several other distinguished guests, said a press release.

Speaking on the occasion, Wani reaffirmed the govern-

ment's commitment to restoring the glory of Pakistan's national sport. He stated that after focusing on the senior and junior men's national teams, the federation is now turning its full attention toward the growth and development of women's hockey. "We are making serious efforts for the revival and promotion of hockey."



Banks' foreclosure powers face safeguards as NA Panel moves to protect borrowers from arbitrary recovery actions

NADEEM TANOLI

ISLAMABAD: The Standing Committee on Finance and Revenue recommended passing the Financial Institutions Recovery of Finance Amendment Act after inserting safeguards to protect mortgagors and ordinary borrowers from arbitrary, coercive and unfair recovery actions by banks and financial institutions. The committee raised serious concerns that foreclosure powers under housing finance could operate harshly against citizens if legal protections,

notice periods, restructuring options and fair remedies are not clearly built into the law. The meeting, chaired by Syed Naveed Qamar at Parliament House, continued detailed consideration of the proposed amendments to the recovery law, particularly the new Section 15A dealing with housing finance, mortgage liabilities, foreclosure procedures and recovery proceedings. The most sensitive issue before the committee was the foreclosure mechanism that could allow financial institutions to move against borrowers in housing

finance cases. Members expressed concern that without adequate safeguards, the proposed framework could become one-sided and place excessive pressure on mortgagors, especially ordinary citizens facing financial difficulty. The committee examined amendments related to Sections 15A(2), 15A(6), 15A(7), 15A(10), 15A(12), 15A(14), 15(b), 15(d), and 15(17). These provisions were discussed in the context of preventing unfair use of recovery powers and ensuring that borrowers are not exposed to sudden or

coercive foreclosure proceedings. During clause by clause review, the committee considered the proposed requirement for first, second and final notices before further recovery action can begin. Each notice would carry a minimum period of thirty days, giving borrowers a structured opportunity to respond before harsher proceedings are initiated. The committee also discussed restructuring, rescheduling and settlement of mortgage liabilities. Members expressed concern that borrowers should not be kept

waiting indefinitely while financial institutions delay decisions on such requests. The discussion reflected the need for time bound and transparent handling of borrower applications. Chairman Syed Naveed Qamar emphasized that the law must maintain a fair balance between the rights of financial institutions and the rights of borrowers. He said recovery mechanisms are necessary for banks, but they must not become tools for arbitrary action against citizens. The committee's recommenda-

tions indicate an attempt to make the recovery law more balanced by protecting the banking system's right to recover defaulted finance while also ensuring that borrowers receive due process, adequate notice and fair consideration of settlement or restructuring options. After detailed deliberations, the committee recommended that the bill, as reported by the Standing Committee, may be passed by the National Assembly. The committee also approved the minutes of its previous meeting.

Fatah 4 Missile test strengthens

Pakistan's defence capability: Ayaz Sadiq

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq on Wednesday congratulated Pakistan Armed Forces, scientists, engineers and the nation on the successful test of the Fatah-4 cruise missile, describing it as an important milestone for strengthening the country's defence capabilities. In a statement issued from Islamabad, the Speaker said the successful test of the Fatah-4 missile would further strengthen Pakistan's defence system and make it more effective against emerging security challenges. He praised the pro-

fessional expertise, dedication and capabilities of Pakistani scientists, engineers and security institutions, saying their efforts were playing a vital role in enhancing the country's defence preparedness and technological advancement. Sardar Ayaz Sadiq said the Fatah-4 missile, equipped with modern avionics and navigation systems, would become an important addition to Pakistan's defence structure. He added that the successful test reflected the professional preparedness, operational capability and strong commitment of Pakistan Armed

Forces towards safeguarding national security. The Speaker said the entire nation was proud of the unmatched abilities and sacrifices of its armed forces, scientists and technical experts. He remarked that Pakistan's defence was in strong hands and the armed forces possessed full capability to respond effectively to any aggression. Reaffirming the resolve to make the country's defence impregnable, the Speaker paid tribute to the sacrifices rendered by Pakistan Armed Forces for national security, sovereignty and stability.

PNCA opens retrospective

exhibition of artist Akram Dost Baloch

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: A rich tapestry of Balochistan's culture, identity and lived realities came into focus at the retrospective exhibition opened at the Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA), showcasing the works of acclaimed Pakistani artist and sculptor Akram Dost Baloch to celebrate his decades-long contribution to contemporary art and cultural heritage.

Organized in collaboration with Nomad Gallery and curated by Nageen Hyat, the exhibition was inaugurated by Dr. Maen Khreasat, Ambassador of



the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, as chief guest.

The inauguration ceremony was attended by Director General PNCA M. Ayoub Jamali, diplomats, artists, members of civil society and art enthusiasts.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Maen Khreasat said Akram Dost Baloch's

work reflected the resilience and cultural richness of Balochistan and highlighted the role of art in preserving identity and building bridges between communities and cultures. He appreciated PNCA and Nomad Gallery for promoting important cultural narratives through the exhibition.

Opinion & Editorial

Faltering tax effort

Khurram Husain
OVER the past 10 years the state's tax effort has burdened compliant taxpayers more and more even as it has largely abandoned any attempt to broaden the tax base or bring in more taxpayers. The results are revealing when you look at the revenue numbers over the preceding decade.

From 2015 till 2025, for example, direct taxes became the largest contributors to the incremental revenue effort of the state. Around one-third of all incremental revenues collected in this decade came from direct taxes. The next biggest contributor was State Bank profits, a non-tax revenue contributor, at 19 per cent. Next up was the sales tax, also at 19pc, and then the petroleum development levy (PDL) at 9pc.

But if you look at the velocity of the growth, State Bank profits win as the fastest-growing contributor to the revenue effort, followed by the PDL, both far above 1,000pc growth over this decade (yes, you read that right — 1,000pc!). There are various reasons for why this might be the case. This decade is unusual for having the longest-running stint of double-digit interest rate; eight out of 10 years since 2015 saw the policy rate at or above 10pc. This automatically inflated State Bank profits.

Second, fuel prices saw massive increases largely due to the devaluations this

decade is famous for. This led to equally massive PDL recoveries in nominal terms. In fact, in rupee terms, the nominal increases in revenues were 400pc but in dollar terms the increase in the decade was only 87pc, meaning much of the increase was due to inflation and devaluation.

The state is increasingly turning predatory in its thirst for revenues.

This is where it gets interesting. In dollar terms, direct taxes contributed more than 36.5pc of total incremental revenues between 2015 and 2025. State Bank profits and PDL were 28pc and 13pc each. Between them, these three heads alone accounted for nearly 80pc of the entire revenue effort, mounted by the state, in that decade when expressed in dollar terms (to remove the effect of inflation and devaluation). Here something important is revealed.

The state is increasingly turning predatory in its thirst for revenues. The numbers show this clearly. To see the trend, you need a longer time horizon, but it is unmistakable. Taxes on consumption are now supplying less and less to the state's revenue effort while taxes on incomes, whether personal or corporate, are carrying a growing burden. The next big contribution is coming from the PDL, which is conveniently one of the few large levies outside the federal divisible pool, and is perhaps the closest the state comes to netting consumption in its

revenue effort. In 2015, they collected around \$1 billion from the PDL. In 2025, that figure jumped to \$3.3bn and has crossed \$4.3bn already in nine months of this fiscal year. This is a stupendous increase! And State Bank profits are just the return flow from the periods of easy money that successive governments used to pump growth from 2015 to 2018 and again from 2020 to 2022.

The trend is worrying because it shows without doubt that the state's revenue effort is faltering over the longer run and it is becoming harder and heavier for compliant tax filers and for those consumptive heads that can be captured with ease and whose benefits need not be shared with the provinces, ie, the PDL. This intensification of the revenue effort is what you get when all attempts at reform have largely been abandoned or reduced to rhetorical gimmickry. And this has not happened under only one government. The decade in question has seen the PML-N, the PTI, the PDM and now the PML-hybrid governments take turns at running the country. The collective failure that this data testifies to belongs to each of them.

The run-up to budget time is a good opportunity to reflect on what is really going on here. Having failed in the task of tax reform, the state is now reduced to capturing whatever incomes it can lay its hands on.

Courtesy Dawn

CSS-between merit and luck

Khalid Ranjha

Aversive stimuli such as electric shocks and by therapists to make drug-abusers, sex offenders and pedophiles unlearn their undesirable behaviour. They purposefully associate pain with unacceptable fantasies to get their patients say, "They hate their desires because they make them sick." This is, however, one of the highly condemned methods of treating patients as it may lead to high rate of dropout, aggression, poor compliance with treatment and death risk for persons with heart and lung problems. As a consequence of criticism on medical and ethical grounds, psychologists are now increasingly using safe stimuli instead of nasty ones to change their patients' behaviour. However, from the information I managed to glean from the CSS Club (a social media platform of the CSS aspirants), discussions with CSS aspirants and mark sheets of the CSS qualifiers of the past few years, FPSC's examiners are still using questionable stimuli and highly controversial methods of discouraging students from opting for certain optional subjects in CSS exam. By way of explanation, one needs to look no further than the detailed mark sheets of candidates in the last couple of years. Students who, unfortunately, opt certain optional subjects often receive shockingly low marks, whereas others who happen to choose high scoring subjects in a given year secure unbelievably high marks, irrespective of the quality of their papers. As believed by the CSS aspirants and as detailed mark sheets of candidates show, FPSC's examiners wittingly target certain optional subjects chosen by a large number of students to ease their own burden. CSS aspirants are thereby in very low spirits due to the belief that no matter how hard they work, they would not get through the exam if their subjects happen to be the lowest scoring. FPSC, therefore, needs to come clean about the criterion of paper checking and rumours of instructed marking in CSS exam.

Courtesy Tribune



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War toll on economy

All of the economic gains of recent years, including the hard-won macroeconomic stability, could be erased if the situation in the Middle East continues to deteriorate. The SBP's latest half-yearly report, 'The State of Pakistan's Economy 2025-26', illustrates how all of the difficult economic repair work is being held hostage by the US-Iran War and its global economic fallout. The data in the report for the first half of the fiscal year suggests the country was on track to grow at a reasonable rate of 3.8% though still relatively low for an emerging economy. Even critics would find it hard to dispute the numbers. Industrial output rose sharply and inflation eased significantly while the SBP's foreign exchange purchases and net financial inflows steadily rebuilt external buffers. Fiscal consolidation also remained on track, with the first budget surplus since FY2002. Independent analysts had noted that this surplus was proof that economic problems were being treated with real solutions, rather than smoke and mirrors. Unfortunately, the SBP report is explicit when it says that since February 2026, the war has "posed significant risks to the macroeconomic outlook", already shifting growth projections to 3.75%, or the lower end of its opening estimated range.

Finance ministry terms report on Dar being 'handed' budget-making process 'misleading, incorrect'



PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Finance said on Thursday that a media report claiming Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar had been handed the budget-making process was "misleading" and "factually incorrect". The clarification came after a report published by The Express Tribune said the government had "handed over the responsibility of making the new budget to Dar after it found the initial work below par".

According to the report, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had constituted a Dar-led committee to "review,

analyse and present tax policy proposals" formulated by the Tax Policy Office working under the Finance Division. Citing a notification, it added: "With the formation of the committee, the final responsibility to finalise roughly Rs215 billion to Rs230bn in new taxes and to grant any tax relief has been handed over to Dar."

Moreover, the report said, the responsibility for finalising the enforcement measures had been handed over to a committee led by Minister for Economic Affairs Ahad Khan Cheema. It mentioned that "the prime minister's decision to place Dar at the head of the budget committee and Cheema at the head of the enforcement committee suggests that budget-making responsibility, for all practical purposes, no longer rests in the Q Block – the seat of the finance minister".

In its clarification on Thursday, the finance ministry said it "strongly rejects the misleading and speculative impression created by The Express

Tribune story titled 'PM hands budget-making to Dar'".

"The story incorrectly portrays the constitution of a high-level review committee by the prime minister as a 'handover' of the budget-making process from the Finance Division or as a 'sidelining' of the finance minister. This interpretation is factually incorrect, misleading and does not reflect the actual mandate or functioning of the committee," it said. The ministry's statement further said that the committee constituted by the PM had been tasked with reviewing and analysing certain tax policy proposals prepared by the Tax Policy Office in the context of the upcoming budget.

"Such consultative and inter-ministerial review mechanisms are neither unusual nor extraordinary, particularly when fiscal measures carry significant economic, political and public implications," it said.

Moreover, as head of the government, the prime minister "is fully within his constitutional.

Pakistan to expose coordinated anti-peace disinformation campaign: Tarar

PEAK POINT



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar on Thursday said that a coordinated negative information campaign initiated from outside Pakistan was aimed at creating deliberate confusion and misinformation in an attempt to discredit Pakistan's role for sustainable peace in the region.

In a post on X, the minister said the malicious campaign was based on unnamed sources and officials and reflected the frustration of those who were weary of peace.

He said facts and verification by credible domestic media sources, as well as multiple fact-check forums, had already exposed the propaganda.

The minister said it was clearly understood that certain elements, mainly detractors of

peace, were behind such stories and were unable to come to terms with Pakistan's role for peace in the region as well as its continued and successful fight against foreign-sponsored and abetted terrorism.

He said elimination of terrorism, resolution of disputes and prevalence of peace perhaps did not suit those behind the malicious campaign.

Attaullah Tarar said Pakistan and its responsible media would continue to expose the nefarious designs of those behind the coordinated campaign.

Aleem Khan praises Azerbaijan's economic rise, growing role in global connectivity

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Communications and President of Istehkame-Pakistan Party, Abdul Aleem Khan, on Thursday lauded Azerbaijan for its remarkable economic progress and pivotal role in promoting global connectivity through key transport corridors linking Asia and Europe.

He expressed these views while addressing a ceremony held in Islamabad to celebrate the 108th Independence Day of Azerbaijan, hosted by Ambassador Khazar Farhadov, said a press release. The event was attended by Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani, Federal Minister for Law and Justice Azam Nazeer Tarar, Federal Ministers Musadik Malik, Shaza Fatima Khawaja and Ferooz Sattar, besides diplomats and other dignitaries. Deputy Speaker National Assembly Ghulam Mustafa Shah, Speaker Punjab Assembly Malik Muhammad Ahmad Khan and Senior Minister Punjab Maryam Aurangzeb were also present on the occasion.

In his keynote address, Federal Minister Abdul Aleem Khan extended heartfelt congratulations on behalf of the Government of Pakistan, commemorating the historic establishment of the Azerbaijan in 1918 and Democratic Republic as the first parliamentary republic in the Muslim World. He emphasized that this milestone is a testament to the indomitable spirit of a nation built on democracy and human rights. Aleem Khan lauded Azerbaijan's remarkable economic progress and its pivotal role in advancing global connectivity through the North-South and East-West transport corridors, specifically highlighting the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route. He noted that Pakistan was among the first to recognize Azerbaijan's restored independence in 1991. Abdul Aleem Khan paid special tribute to the late Heydar Aliyev for laying the foundations of bilateral ties and praised the visionary leadership of President Ilham Aliyev for evolving this friendship into a robust 21st-century.

Mohsin Naqvi visits Peshawar Police Headquarters

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi paid an important visit to the Peshawar Police Headquarters on Thursday, where he met with the families of the 15 police personnel martyred in Bannu and received detailed briefings on security and counter-terrorism operations in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

During the meeting, Minister Mohsin Naqvi expressed profound respect for the sacrifices of the martyred officers. He offered condolences to their families, especially the mothers of the fallen heroes, assuring them that the nation stands with them in their grief.

"Your courage and resilience strengthens our resolve even further," Minister Naqvi said while speaking to the mothers.

"Your brave sons achieved the highest honor of martyrdom by setting an extraordinary example of valor."

The Interior Minister presided over a special briefing on the Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, where he praised.

Minister rejects impression that possible 28th Amendment would undo 18th

PEAK POINT



ISLAMABAD: State Minister for Law Barrister Aqeel Malik has rejected impressions that a possible 28th Constitutional Amendment would roll back the 18th Amendment, calling such claims "extremely false". "This impression being created that if the 28th Amendment is introduced, it is a rollback of the 18th Amendment — I believe an extremely false impression is being created," Malik said during Geo News' programme "Capital Talk". The remarks came amid growing political debate over reports of discussions surrounding a possible constitutional amendment ahead of Eid ul Adha, which is expected to take place on May 27. The amendment, passed during the Pakistan

Peoples Party (PPP)-led government in 2010, has triggered many debates in the past, with calls to make changes to it. However, PPP has strongly objected to such proposals and has vowed resistance against any tweaks to the amendment. The 18th Amendment devolved powers to provinces on issues such as health, women's development, social welfare, and local government. The law minister — during the show — further said no official work was currently underway on any constitutional.

Tallal Chaudhry says Pakistan's ties with UAE 'absolutely fine'

PEAK POINT



ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Interior Tallal Chaudhry on Thursday said that Pakistan's relationship with the United Arab Emirates was "absolutely fine".

Chaudhry made the remarks while speaking on the floor of the National Assembly in response to concerns raised by lawmakers regarding the deportation of Pakistanis from the Gulf country.

Several media outlets in recent days have reported that the Gulf country had begun a "large-scale expulsion" of Pakistani workers, particularly Shia workers, signalling a shift in Pakistan-UAE ties. The Interior Minister has denied the claims.

"I don't know why people are intent on building a narrative against a country; that people from there are being deported based on sectarian differences," the state minister said on Thursday.

"There is no such thing. The government has categorically denied this. Our ties with the UAE are absolutely fine," he said.



ISLAMABAD: 108th Independence Day celebration of Azerbaijan, Chairman Senate Yousaf Raza Gilani, Chief guest Federal Minister Abdul Aleem Khan along with Ambassador H.E Khazar Farhadov attended & cut cake. Federal & Provincial Ministers and political & Diplomatic dignitaries were present on the occasion.

Pakistan, Tajikistan stress regional cooperation on climate, water challenges

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and Tajikistan on Thursday underscored the need for enhanced regional cooperation to address shared environmental challenges, including climate change, glacial melt, water management and wildlife conservation.

The understanding was reached during a meeting between Federal Minister for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination Dr. Musadik Masood Malik and Tajik Ambassador Yusuf Sharifzoda in Islamabad.

During the meeting, both sides discussed matters of

mutual cooperation in the fields of climate change, water, wildlife protection and regional connectivity.

The discussions particularly focused on the upcoming 4th High-Level International Conference on the International Decade for Action "Water for Sustainable Development" (2018-2028), scheduled to be held in Dushanbe, where Dr. Musadik Malik expected to represent the Prime Minister of Pakistan.

Ambassador Yusuf Sharifzoda said Pakistan and Tajikistan shared many geographical and environmental similarities, noting that both countries host nearly 13,000



glaciers each and have already lost around 1,000 glaciers due to the impacts of climate change and the passage of time.

He stressed the need for stronger regional collaboration to tackle the growing environmental threats posed by glacial melt.

The ambassador further

highlighted that several protected wildlife species, including markhor, snow leopards, ibex and various migratory birds, were found in both countries.

He said Tajikistan had established protected valleys and conservation zones for the preservation of these species and emphasized the

importance of joint cooperation between the two countries in wildlife protection, including through formal agreements and memorandums of understanding.

Dr. Musadik Malik said energy, water and climate were intrinsically interconnected and emphasized that regional countries must work together to address shared environmental challenges.

He expressed Pakistan's interest in strengthening cooperation with Tajikistan in the fields of climate resilience, water management, wildlife conservation and sustainable development.

The minister also expressed interest in estab-

lishing a regional corridor between Pakistan and Tajikistan focused not only on climate and wildlife cooperation but also on enhancing broader trade and regional connectivity.

During the discussion, Ambassador Yusuf Sharifzoda also spoke about the potential for future collaboration in utilizing regional weather patterns and innovative solutions aimed at improving water and climate management.

The ambassador remarked that the people of Pakistan and Tajikistan shared deep historical, cultural and civilizational roots despite being separated.