



Rana Sanauallah says external elements funding banned outfit in AJK



Ministers pay utility bills themselves: Azam Nazeer



Syedaal Khan, Qadir Baloch discuss development, issues of Balochistan

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Monday 15 June 2026

Zil Hajj 29, 1447

A.H VOI No: 06

Issue No. 118

Pages 4 Rs. 20

'Rulers deceiving themselves': Opposition leaders reject budget, say public crushed by poverty

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Opposition leaders on Sunday rejected the federal budget, accusing the government of ignoring economic realities, burdening citizens with taxes and failing to address rising poverty. "They [rulers] are deceiving themselves," Senate Opposition Leader Allama Raja Nasir Abbas said while addressing a budget seminar in Islamabad, criticising the government's claim that a person earning Rs280 a day was not below the poverty line. Abbas said the rulers were "not ready to see facts with their own eyes" and alleged that the government had failed to provide services to the people. "The people of Pakistan are being crushed in the mill of poverty," he said, adding that prices of food items were "touching the sky". Comparing the coun-

try's finances to a household budget, the opposition leader said that when a family's expenses exceeded its income, it came under the burden of debt and then started selling its assets. "Pakistan's income is less than its expenses," he said, adding that no serious effort had been made to reduce expenses and increase income. Abbas also warned that if the next elections were held under the same system, the results would be "the worst". Tehreek-e-Tahafuz-e-Ayeen-e-Pakistan leader Mustafa Nawaz Khokhar said the rise in poverty was proof of the failure of economic policies. "The real measure of economic growth is improvement in people's lives," he said, adding that life had become difficult for low-income groups. Khokhar said a tax system could not be effective without state services.



ISLAMABAD: Ameer Jamat-e-Islami Hafiz Naeem-ur-Rehman addressing a press conference here on Sunday.

Iran says draft US deal includes oil sanctions waiver, nuclear limits and asset release

PEAK POINT



IRAN: A senior Iranian official told Reuters that a final draft of the memorandum of understanding with the United States covers a range of issues, including Tehran's nuclear programme, the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz and US waivers on oil sanctions, with a final agreement to be negotiated within 60 days after both sides endorse the memorandum.

According to the official, Iran would immediately reopen the Strait of Hormuz to all commercial vessels, while the United States would lift its naval blockade on Iranian ports. The process of lifting the blockade would begin immediately after the memorandum is signed and would be completed within 30 days.

The official said the United States has agreed not to impose any new sanctions on Iran until a final agreement is reached. Following such an agreement, all US and UN sanctions on Iran would be removed according to a mutually agreed timetable. Under the draft, Washington would also waive oil sanctions on Iran for a specified period, allowing Tehran to resume oil exports.

Info minister invites opposition for Charter of Economy, defends proposed FY27 budget

PEAK POINT



ISLAMABAD: Information Minister Attaullah Tarar on Sunday invited the opposition to sign a Charter of Economy (CoE) and defended the federal budget

2026-27. Speaking on the floor of the National Assembly on Sunday, Tarar gave credit to the government for what he called "sagacious" economic policy. "It's a friendly and relief-oriented budget for all," he said, noting that the budget has proposed to abolish the super tax, which had been approved by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. The information minister highlighted that revenue and foreign remittances had increased. Tarar urged opposition to appreciate the good decisions made by the government, particularly its efforts for peace in the Middle East. "Today the economy is on the right track," he asserted. On June 12, the government presented the budget for FY27, announcing relief measures for the salaried, corporate, real estate and export sectors to revive struggling economic activity. While the government has placed greater emphasis on enforcement measures rather than introducing new taxes, it has proposed taxes on social media earnings and a fixed tax scheme for small traders and shopkeepers. Responding to Tarar in the NA, PTI leader Asad Qaiser said the PTI was willing to sign a Charter of Democracy to ensure an independent election commission and judiciary.

FIFA World Cup bus set alight as chaotic celebrations erupt in NYC's Manhattan after Knicks win

PEAK POINT



NEW YORK: A World Cup bus was set alight and a teenager suffered a gunshot wound during chaotic scenes in Midtown Manhattan as thousands of basketball fans poured into the streets late on Saturday to celebrate the New York Knicks' historic win in the NBA Finals. Some fans set off fireworks and fired smoke grenades after spilling out of packed bars and outdoor venues, chanting "Knicks in five!" to mark their team's victory in the fifth game of a possible seven. The New York Knicks have not won a title since 1973, and this was just their third appearance in the finals after losses in 1994 and 1999 — to the Houston Rockets and the San Antonio Spurs, whom they defeated on Saturday night. At about 2am, a 17-year-old was shot in the foot during celebrations in Times Square, a New York police officer told Reuters. Three persons of interest were in custody, he added. As the celebrations ran into the night, hundreds of mostly young people swarmed a convoy of about 15 shuttle buses in Times Square after they transported soccer fans from the first World Cup game in the New York City area.

US rejects India's protest over missile attack on ship

PEAK POINT

NEW YORK: The US has rejected India's protest over the missile attack on the ship and has refused to apologise for the deaths of Indian crew members.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio has made it clear to India that commercial ships in the Strait of Hormuz should also follow the orders of US forces.

Marco Rubio said violating the closure of the Strait of Hormuz and illegal shipments of Iranian oil will not be tolerated. The Indian Foreign Minister had contacted his US counterpart.

NA Budget debate: lawmakers call for relief, equity, long-term economic stability

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: The National Assembly on Sunday witnessed an extensive budget debate, with lawmakers across party lines discussing fiscal priorities, economic challenges and public relief measures, while also acknowledging government efforts amid difficult financial and security conditions.

Participating in the budget debate, Pakistan People's Party Parliamentarians (PPPP) MNA Syed Hussain Tariq said it was a positive development that the entire federal cabinet was present during the budget session, terming it encouraging for parliamentary engagement.

He said a budget was not merely about figures but about balancing debit

and credit while setting a long-term direction for the its various aspects. He also referred to



country. He stressed that the real impact of a budget should be measured by whether it improves the living conditions of the working class, adding that if lower-income groups were satisfied, it could be termed a truly people-friendly budget.

He said the PPP and its allied parties were engaged in consultations on the budget and would continue deliberations on

inflation, stating it stood at around 8 percent, and noted that rising fuel prices had increased transport costs and overall inflationary pressure. Electricity prices, he added, had increased by 54 percent. He questioned how a person earning between Rs 40,000 and Rs 45,000 could afford electricity bills ranging from Rs 20,000 to Rs 25,000. Turning to agriculture,

he appreciated the efforts of Minister for National Food Security Rana Tanveer Hussain, driving several concrete policies and initiatives to modernize farming and ensure food security.

However, he said agriculture had faced significant neglect over the years, and this year's allocations and focus on the sector appeared comparatively limited. Only Rs4 billion had been allocated for agriculture, which was the country's backbone and a sector capable of driving meaningful improvement in the national economy.

He said a large portion—almost 99 percent of this allocation appeared to be absorbed by salaries and administrative expenses, leaving little room for meaningful development work.

UK intercepts Russian shadow fleet vessel in Channel: Defence ministry

PEAK POINT



ISLAMABAD: British forces on Sunday intercepted a sanctioned oil tanker belonging to Russia's shadow fleet in the English Channel, the defence ministry said, in a six-hour operation hailed by Kyiv.

Navy commandos boarded the ship under cover of darkness by fast-roping from a helicopter in the dark, according to footage released by the ministry.

The interception in the early hours was supported by Chinook, Merlin Mk4 and Wildcat helicopters and a maritime patrol aircraft, a statement said.

The frigate HMS Sutherland and the minehunter HMS Ledbury were also involved. "In the first UK-led operation of its kind.



SPORTS



India register commanding win over Pakistan in Women's T20 World Cup clash



PEAK POINT

BIRMINGHAM: Deepti Sharma led India's bowling attack with a five-wicket haul as they beat Pakistan by 64 runs in their Women's T20 World Cup 2026 encounter at Edgbaston in Birmingham on Sunday.

Chasing 171, Pakistan were bowled out for 106 in 17 overs, as India's disciplined bowling attack staged a strong comeback after a steady start from the opposition.

Pakistan began positively, with the openers putting on crucial runs. Muneeba Ali led from the front and applied early pressure on the Indian attack.

Deepti made the breakthrough by ending the 38-run opening stand, dismissing Gul Feroza for 12 off nine deliveries, which included two boundaries.

Muneeba and Ayesha Zafar then steadied the innings and took Pakistan past the 50-run mark, but Deepti struck again to remove Ayesha for 12 off eight balls, leaving Pakistan at 53/2 in 6.3 overs.

Despite Muneeba's resistance, Pakistan continued to lose wickets at regular intervals. Shree Charani added to the pressure by dismissing Saira Jabeen for two runs. Muneeba was eventually



run out after a composed 41 off 35 deliveries, including five boundaries, leaving Pakistan struggling at 75/4 in 10.5 overs.

Captain Fatima Sana fell for a duck, dismissed by Shafali Verma, while Natalia Pervaiz contributed seven runs before becoming the sixth wicket to fall.

Charani claimed her third wicket by removing Rameen Shamim, reducing Pakistan further after she managed just four runs from six deliveries.

Deepti then returned to clean up the tail, dismissing Aliya Riaz and Tasmia Rubab before Nashra Sandhu became the final wicket,

sealing a dominant Indian victory. Deepti finished with outstanding figures of 5/10 in four overs, while Charani took three wickets.

Shafali Verma also chipped in with a wicket as India wrapped up a comprehensive win.

Batting first, the Girls in Blue posted 170-6 in their allotted 20 overs, courtesy of a crucial partnership between Smriti Mandhana and Harmanpreet Kaur.

India made a mixed start as opener Shafali Verma opened the scoring with a six off the very first delivery, but was dismissed later in the same over by spinner Sadia Iqbal.

Masood's Test captaincy to be decided by 'cricket minds', says Naqvi



PEAK POINT

LAHORE: Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Chairman Mohsin Naqvi stated that the decision regarding Shan Masood's continuation as captain of Pakistan's men's Test side would be made by "cricket minds".

Naqvi, while speaking informally to the media after meeting the national players and support staff on the sidelines of Pakistan's pre-season red-ball camp at the National Cricket Academy (NCA) here, revealed that he would soon meet former cricketer Younis Khan as part of the cricket board's plans to expand its pool of cricket experts.

"We are increasing the number of cricket minds so that better results can be achieved," Naqvi said.

The PCB chairman further stressed that cricket-related matters should be decided by those with extensive knowledge of the game, adding that he intended to empower the advisory group with full authority.

"I want cricket minds to decide what should and should not be done," he remarked.

Naqvi disclosed that the panel of cricket experts, which currently consists of three individuals, would soon be expanded to six or seven members through consultations with former cricketers.

Spain win 5-1 to extend Pakistan's winless run at FIH Pro League



PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan suffered its ninth consecutive defeat in the FIH Pro League after a comprehensive 5-1 loss to Spain in a league-stage match at the Belfius Hockey Arena on Sunday.

Spain made a strong start, taking the lead in the 11th minute of the opening quarter when Alvarez Nicolas found the net, applying early pressure on the Green Shirts. The quarter ended with Spain holding a 1-0 advantage.

Pakistan earned a penalty corner in the same period but could not convert either opportunity, as Spain remained in control with a 3-1 lead heading into the final quarter. Spain shifted gears once again in the closing stages, adding two more goals to seal a dominant victory.

The Green Shirts showed some resistance after the break and finally broke through in the 43rd minute of the third quarter, when Abu Mahmood pulled one back to give Pakistan a brief lifeline.

Pakistan were also awarded two more penalty corners in the same period but could not convert either opportunity, as Spain remained in control with a 3-1 lead heading into the final quarter. Spain shifted gears once again in the closing stages, adding two more goals to seal a dominant victory.

The emphatic win marked Spain's first victory of the campaign, moving them up to seventh place with five points and a goal difference of -16.

Connolly century sets up dramatic Australia ODI win over Bangladesh

PEAK POINT

MIRPUR: Opener Cooper Connolly blazed 149 runs off 134 balls to lead Australia to a dramatic one-wicket victory over Bangladesh in the third and final one-day match in Mirpur on Sunday.

Bangladesh had already clinched the series by winning the first two matches, but Cooper's innings overshadowed a career-best 6-48 by left-arm pace bowler Shoriful Islam.

Set 275 to win, Australia scraped home with three balls to spare when Adam Zampa hit a cover drive to the boundary off Taskin Ahmed.

Bangladesh earlier reached 274-5 after winning the toss, with Towhid Hridoy



leading the way with a composed innings of 83 off 88 balls.

Australia started their run chase strongly, racing to 40 before losing captain Josh Inglis to Shoriful in the fifth over.

Shoriful then bowled Matt Renshaw for a duck two balls later to have Australia at 40-2.

Australia were then bowled at 70-3 when Alex Carey fell for eight to a stunning catch by Soumya Sarkar at short cover off Taskin.

Connolly refused to buckle, the 25-year-old opener sharing a 64-run stand with Marnus Labuschagne (29) and then similarly valuable partnerships with Cameron Green and Oliver Peake.

Yawar Hussain reviews facilities at PSB Islamabad



PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Director General of the Pakistan Sports Board (PSB), Yawar Hussain, conducted a detailed visit to various sports and administrative facilities at the PSB Islamabad on late Saturday to assess their condition, review ongoing activities, and receive briefings from officials.

During the visit, the newly-appointed

DG toured different sections of the sports complex, including sports venues, athlete training facilities, accommodation areas, administrative offices and support services. Officials concerned with the existing infrastructure, operational matters, maintenance requirements and challenges being faced in the day-to-day functioning of the facilities.

Yawar Hussain reviewed facilities at PSB Islamabad. Yawar Hussain interacted with officials and staff members at different departments and sought detailed information regarding the utilization of sports facilities, athlete support mechanisms and ongoing development and renovation works.

He emphasized the importance of maintaining international standards at sports venues to facilitate athletes and promote high-performance sports in the country. The DG was informed about the current status of various facilities, including training arrangements for national athletes, upkeep of sports infrastructure, and measures being taken to improve services for sports federations and athletes. Yawar Hussain underscored the Pakistan Sports Board's commitment to providing a conducive environment for athletes and ensure that sports infrastructure is effectively utilized for the development of sports across the country.

England reunited with World Cup kit after 'heist'

PEAK POINT

ENGLAND: England goalkeeper Dean Henderson said he had his boots back after training equipment was stolen ahead of the squad's arrival at their World Cup training base.

Kansas City mayor Quinton Lucas earlier put out a statement on the "heist".

He said officials at "local, state and federal levels" were investigating the theft from vehicles transferring equipment from England's training camp in Florida.

But it is understood most of the items have now been recovered.

Henderson was asked after England's first training session at Swope Soccer Village whether he had lost his boots.

"I think I did, but I got them back, so it's all good," said the Crystal Palace goal-



keeper. "I think they got everything back, so it's all good." Defender Dan Burn was relaxed about the episode. "Obviously it was to do with the police," he said. "So I don't know how much people know about it. We didn't know a lot about it, but I've got all my kit and all my boots." Thomas Tuchel's England, among the favourites to win the World Cup, had a gentle training session in front of scores of watching fans on Saturday. They open their World

Cup campaign against Croatia on Wednesday, before further games in Group L against Ghana and Panama. Meanwhile, two men were charged Saturday over the theft of \$18,000-worth of kit and equipment from the England team at the World Cup, a US prosecutor said. Mustafa Salik and Erfan Kamal each face one count of receiving stolen property, according to a statement from the office of Jackson County Prosecutor Melesa Johnson.



IDI, KAC join hands to resolve civil, commercial disputes through legal binding arbitration

PEAK POINT ISLAMABAD: The International Dispute Resolution Institute (IDI) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Karamay Arbitration Commission (KAC), China, a regional arbitration institution based in Karamay, Xinjiang, established to resolve civil and commercial disputes through legally binding arbitration.

The Commission primarily handles trade, investment, construction, and energy-related disputes, particularly those linked to Karamay's oil and industrial sectors, said a press release. The MoU was signed in the presence and

facilitation of Secretary-General of the Karamay Arbitration Commission, Du Yaowei, reflecting the Commission's continued commitment to international cooperation and its growing role as a regional arbitration hub in Xinjiang and beyond.

Director and Member Advisory Board, International Dispute Resolution Institute (IDI), Khalid Taimur Akram, signed the agreement, reinforcing IDI's vision of strengthening institutional linkages under the Belt and Road Initiative and enhancing cross-border legal cooperation between Pakistan and China. The Karamay Arbitration Commission, described as a



Chinese government-supported arbitration mechanism for neighbouring and Belt and Road countries, also made Khalid Taimur Akram an arbitration member and formalized an agreement of cooperation.

The Xinjiang Uygur

Autonomous Region of China shares land borders with Pakistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Afghanistan, Mongolia, Russia, and India, and the Commission is engaged in handling Chinese B2B and cross-border commercial disputes involving these land-connected countries.

This agreement marks a significant milestone in IDI's expanding international partnerships across China and Central Asia. It establishes a forward-looking cooperation framework aimed at strengthening institutional arbitration, improving cross-border dispute resolution mechanisms, and promoting legal collaboration between the two institutions. The Karamay Arbitration Commission, which also plays a role in facilitating arbitration for regional and cross-border commercial disputes, continues to expand its international engagement across Eurasia, including cooperation with

neighboring countries connected through Xinjiang's strategic geographic location.

Through this MoU, both institutions have agreed to explore cooperation in institutional arbitration development, capacity-building and training programs, academic and professional exchange initiatives, and the promotion of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) frameworks within China-Pakistan legal and economic corridors.

This partnership is expected to contribute meaningfully to strengthening modern arbitration practices, legal innovation, and sustainable economic cooperation across the wider region.

Green Pakistan Programme plants 2.3bn saplings in FY2025-26

PEAK POINT ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has planted, regenerated, or distributed nearly 2.3 billion saplings under the Green Pakistan Programme, marking one of the country's largest afforestation drives aimed at combating climate change, restoring ecosystems, and improving environmental sustainability.

According to official data available with Wealth Pakistan, the programme remains a key component of the country's environmental

strategy as Pakistan faces growing challenges from rising temperatures, floods, droughts, and land degradation.

The data revealed that by March 2026, a cumulative total of 2,283.3 million plants had been planted, regenerated, or distributed across the country. The programme achieved 69.3 percent of its overall target and increased tree cover over nearly 0.7 million hectares.

During July-March FY2025-26 alone, provinces and territories reported plant-



ing, regenerating, or distributing 30.5 million plants. Performance against plantation targets stood at 86 percent in Sindh, 79 percent in Punjab, 73 percent in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 62 percent in

Gilgit-Baltistan, 34 percent in Azad Jammu and Kashmir, and 28 percent in Balochistan.

Pakistan's total forest area is estimated at about 4.1 million hectares, accounting for only 4.7 percent of the country's land area. The survey estimates annual deforestation at around 11,000 hectares, highlighting continued pressure on forest resources.

The large-scale plantation campaign forms part of broader efforts to expand forest cover, restore degraded landscapes, and strengthen resilience to climate-related risks.

According to the report, increasing tree cover is critical for improving ecosystem health, conserving biodiver-

sity, reducing soil erosion, and enhancing the country's capacity to adapt to climate change.

The Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination has implemented many plantation activities in collaboration with provincial and territorial governments.

The report notes that climate adaptation and environmental protection have become increasingly important policy priorities following a series of climate-related disasters in recent years. It

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Navigating the Hormuz dilemma

Khurram Abbas
THE US war on Iran has exposed the fundamental strategic vulnerability of the Arab Gulf states. The double blockade of the Strait of Hormuz by Iran and the US has significantly affected the oil and gas exports of the GCC states.

The impact has varied from state to state. Qatar, Bahrain and Kuwait have been the most affected GCC countries due to their overwhelming dependence on Hormuz for exports. Saudi Arabia and the UAE have managed to partially mitigate the disruption by diverting some oil flows through Yanbu and Fujairah, respectively, yet these alternatives possess limited capacities and are not a complete substitute for the Hormuz route.

Even if the conflict is over and the oil supplies resume, the GCC countries cannot guarantee uninterrupted oil supplies to international partners during another crisis in the future. This is mainly because the Strait of Hormuz proved to be a central pillar of Tehran's deterrence strategy against the US during the recent conflict. It is highly likely that Tehran will continue to use Hormuz as a deterrent during any future external aggression.

Hence, uncertainty over the future of Hormuz will continue to haunt the Arab Gulf countries' strategic thinking. This emerging challenge may be termed as the 'Hormuz dilemma'.

Energy-exporting Arab

Gulf states as well as Asian importing nations are considering various strategies to overcome Hormuz dilemma. This includes considerations of expanding capacities of national strategic oil reserves, and finding alternative markets and supply routes.

The Hormuz dilemma has provided Islamabad a strategic opportunity to pitch the idea of 'renting oil and gas storage facilities' to the Arab Gulf states.

The principal objective of establishing strategic oil and gas storage facilities of the Arab Gulf countries in Pakistan would be to ensure that buyers can receive acceptable substitutes of already stored Qatari LNG, Emirati oil, Bahraini petroleum products and, potentially, Saudi crude from facilities located along Pakistan's coastal areas and transported through Gwadar, Port Qasim or other designated energy hubs during periods when the strait is closed.

Islamabad has an opportunity to pitch the idea of 'renting oil and gas storage facilities' to the Arab Gulf states.

For major Asian energy consumers such as South Korea, Japan, China and others, this arrangement would provide a credible energy assurance mechanism during any future conflict involving Iran and the Strait of Hormuz. Strategic reserves in Pakistan could function as an insurance policy against geopolitical instability for

countries that remain heavily dependent on Gulf energy supplies and exposed to disruptions in Hormuz.

Pakistan is particularly well-suited for such an arrangement. During the over 100 days of armed hostilities between the US and Iran, it emerged as one of the few countries in the region that maintained cordial relations with both Iran and the Arab Gulf states. In case of any conflict, Tehran would be less likely to target GCC strategic reserve facilities located inside Pakistan's territory. As a trusted partner with a degree of deterrent capability and diplomatic credibility, Islamabad can host strategic petroleum reserve facilities for GCC countries.

For the GCC states, such an arrangement could serve as one of the most practical alternatives to ensure continuity of oil and gas supply during future crises. It would help reassure international buyers that temporary disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz would not automatically translate into supply shortages. Gulf producers would be better positioned to maintain contractual obligations and avoid declaring force majeure, as several exporters were compelled to do so after prolonged disruptions in the strait. More importantly, strategic storage facilities in Pakistan would create a secondary export platform outside the immediate conflict zone.

Courtesy Dawn

Saved by the Budget?

Fahd Husain
On Friday evening, Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb stood on the floor of the National Assembly, and declared: "Hey all, we're still around, and plan to stick around." Well, not exactly in those words, but the speech that he delivered – dripping with bureaucratic clichés, as always – conveyed (or hoped to) the same message.

To the shock of all, it may just work.

Because for some strange and inexplicable reason, the government has pulled off a decent budget. Perhaps even Decent-Plus. People are genuinely taken aback. How could the Finance Team do this? How dare they! The bitter truth however is that, whether we like it or not, even the doubters and haters (barring the few, the usual) are muttering under their breath: "Not bad – not bad at all."

Not bad usually equals grudging good. But grudging good turns out to be less grudging when timed with the southward graph of the government's perception. On a flatlined heartbeat, even a blip is considered monumental and miraculous.

The Budget 2026-27 tells an economic story that goes like this: "Once Upon a Time there was a government that ruled a country freefalling into default. But then it so happened that dark clouds of despair lifted to let in the sunshine of hope, primary surpluses and soothing relief for the salaried class." [End of Chapter 2].

Perhaps more importantly, the Budget also tells a political story. In fact, it produces a twist in an ongoing story about the government's performance and longevity (or the lack of both). Recent days have seen feverish discussions generated by various columns and commentary on why the government is struggling to justify its existence even when it has more space available than its predecessors. One Red Zone insider told me in so many words: "This sudden, sharp and pointed criticism has shaken the government."

Courtesy Tribune

Uneducated and unwell

Pakistan's Economic Survey 2025-26 offers a useful yardstick to gauge the state of the country's health and education sectors over the past year. The assessment, however, offers little cause for celebration. Beneath the government's claims of gradual progress, Pakistan continues to rank among the poorest performers in South Asia on key human development indicators while spending less than 1% of GDP on both health and education. The survey is therefore a record of what has been neglected. While life expectancy has increased modestly to 67.8 years, it remains nearly five years below the South Asian average. One in six Pakistanis suffers from undernourishment and more than a third of children under five continue to face stunting. Equally concerning is the country's struggle to provide basic sanitation and safe drinking water to large segments of the population. To be fair, some progress has been made: immunisation coverage has improved, neonatal and infant mortality rates have declined, and the number of doctors has increased. Yet the gains remain incremental and insufficient. The education sector presents a similarly mixed picture. Literacy has increased from 61% to 63% and the proportion of out-of-school children has declined.

Bilawal calls for end to AJK protests as unrest 'damaging' Pakistan's reputation amid global spotlight



PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari on Sunday appealed to those protesting in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) to end their demonstrations, cautioning that the ongoing unrest was "damaging both the Kashmiri cause and Pakistan's reputation". In a statement issued on Sunday, Bilawal — whose PPP is in government in AJK — noted that the imminent signing of the Pakistan-mediated peace pact between the United States and Iran "marks a historic moment". "At a

time when the international spotlight is firmly on Pakistan, the ongoing unrest in Azad Jammu and Kashmir is damaging both the Kashmiri cause and Pakistan's reputation," the former foreign minister said.

He observed that the unrest was "also creating an unnecessary opportunity for hostile actors and the India-Israel nexus to exploit the situation for their own purposes".

"I therefore appeal to all protestors to bring their demonstrations to a peaceful conclusion. Those individuals who have taken the law into their own hands should surrender themselves to the local authorities and allow due process to take its course," Bilawal said.

The PPP chairman called for all political grievances and disagreements to be resolved through "democratic, constitutional, and peaceful means". "Parliament and the political process — not the streets — are the appropriate forums for addressing

and settling such issues," he stated. Bilawal recalled that the PPP had already called upon the AJK Election Commission to withdraw its "pre-mature election schedule", which had set the polls for July 27. "We remain committed to pursuing a political solution and would seek to establish a Truth and Reconciliation Commission to address outstanding grievances, move the process forward, and bring these matters to a just and lasting conclusion," the PPP chairman said, stressing that the people of Kashmir "should not have to endure repeated cycles of protest, confrontation, and uncertainty". Apparently referring to the June 5 decision to ban the Joint Awami Action Committee (JAAC), Bilawal said: "If all stakeholders, including the federal government, are in agreement, the AJK government could, in due course, review the notifications issued in relation to protesting parties.

Rana Sanaullah says external elements funding banned outfit in AJK

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Adviser to the Prime Minister on Political Affairs Rana Sanaullah claimed that external elements were financing the proscribed Jammu Kashmir Joint Awami Action Committee (JAAC), saying the banned outfit rejected multiple offers aimed at peaceful resolution of disputes.

Speaking on Geo News' programme 'Jirga', Sanaullah said that the banned outfit had never before demanded the abolishment of 12 refugee seats in the Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Assembly. "They [JAAC] made the demand in October 2025 along with the other 38 demands and agreed to the formation of a committee on this matter," he said. The AJK government on June 5 declared JAAC a proscribed organisation under the Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA), saying the group was engaged in



terrorism. The ban was imposed days ahead of the banned outfit's planned June 9 protest seeking the abolition of 12 seats in the AJK reserved for refugees from Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) who migrated to Pakistan after 1947. Speaking during today's programme, Sanaullah said that the banned JAAC had raised a new demand this time, seeking the removal of the declaration stating that Kashmir would accede to Pakistan after independence, from the undertaking required to be signed for the AJK Assembly elections.

Hyderabad-Sukkur motorway to be completed in 3-4 years: Ahsan Iqbal

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Prof Ahsan Iqbal on Sunday said the Hyderabad-Sukkur motorway would be completed within the next three to four years.

Responding to points raised during the budget debate by MQM-P's Syed Waseem Hussain, he said work had already started on the new alignment of the M-9 Karachi-Hyderabad motorway.

He said the federal government had also provided a grant for the establishment of a university in Hyderabad.

The minister said Hyderabad had long been deprived of higher education facilities, noting that despite 75 years of history, the city had only recently seen focused efforts to establish a university through a special federal grant aimed at benefiting the youth of the region.

He said the Hyderabad University project, which should have been completed by 2021, faced delays under previous administrations.

However, he added that significant progress had been made in recent years, with multiple development initiatives being advanced for the city.

Ahsan Iqbal further said the federal government remained committed to completing key infrastructure and public welfare projects, including efforts to address Karachi's water supply issues.

He said water supply from the K-IV (K-4) project to Karachi was expected to be completed by December 2026, after which operational responsibility would be handed over to the provincial government.

He stressed that sustained cooperation between federal and provincial authorities was essential for the timely completion and effective management of such large-scale public utility projects.

Ministers pay utility bills themselves: Azam Nazeer

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Law and Justice Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar on Sunday said that federal ministers pay their own utility bills and that the government is not bearing any such expenses.

Speaking on the floor of the National Assembly, he clarified that ministers personally pay electricity, gas, and other household utility bills, rejecting the impression that such costs are covered by the government.

He further said that the fuel allocation for ministers has been reduced as part of austerity measures. "Ministers were earlier entitled to 400 litres of petrol, which has now been reduced to 200 litres," he said.

Tarar added that apart from the revised 200-litre fuel limit, ministers are not availing any additional benefits.

He said that if members of the assembly wish to raise concerns regarding fuel allowances, the matter can be discussed further in the relevant forum.

Syedaal Khan, Qadir Baloch discuss development, issues of Balochistan

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Chairman Senate Syedaal Khan met former federal minister and senior politician from Balochistan, Lieutenant General (R) Abdul Qadir Baloch, and discussed issues of Balochistan. During the meeting, both leaders held a detailed discussion on the overall political, social, and economic situation in Balochistan, along with various issues and development prospects concerning the province. The meeting emphasized the need for sustainable development in Balochistan, improvement of infrastructure, and strengthening of education, healthcare, and public welfare initiatives. Matters related to creating employment opportunities for the youth, promoting voca-



tional training, and enabling young people to play an active role in national development were also discussed. Syedaal Khan stated that Balochistan holds fundamental importance in Pakistan's development and prosperity, adding that the province's natural resources, strategic geographic location, and talented youth are valuable national assets. He emphasized that addressing the deprivations faced by the people of Balochistan, ensuring the provision of essential services, and timely completion.

Riaz backs rainwater harvesting initiative to combat climate change, water scarcity

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Housing and Works Mian Riaz Hussain Pirzada has said that the devastating impacts of climate change have already gripped Pakistan, exposing the country to increasingly frequent natural disasters and environmental challenges.

The minister expressed these views during a meeting with renowned environmentalist and social activist Shahdia Kausar Farooq, Chairperson of Subh-e-Nau (SN), who called on him to discuss climate resilience and water conservation measures.

Speaking on the occasion, Pirzada said that climate change



has created a dual challenge for Pakistan.

On one hand, the country faces floods and unseasonal heavy rainfall, while on the other, recurring droughts are pushing communities toward food insecurity.

He stressed the need for urgent and practical measures to address the growing environmental crisis.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Prof Ahsan Iqbal addressing NA session.

Pakistan HC Maldives celebrates life, achievements of Quaid-e-Azam

PEAK POINT

MALE: In commemoration of Quaid's 150th birth anniversary, Pakistan High Commission Maldives, in collaboration with Maldives' National University, organized a students' debate competition on the life, vision, leadership traits, contributions, personality and legacy of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah. Heena Waleed, Maldives' Minister of Arts, Culture and Heritage graced the event as Chief guest. Ambassadors of China, Japan, High Commissioner of Sri Lanka

and Counsellor General of Russia also graced the occasion. Adnana Cheema, UNDP's Resident Rep, Ali Fakhir and Professor Mohamed Didi were the judges for debate competition. Dr Fiaz Gillani and Air Cdre (r) Khalid Chishti (on line from Pakistan) also shared their valuable thoughts about Quaid's remarkable achievements.

Event brought together large number of MNU students, distinguished Maldivian guests, diplomats and members of the Pakistani community for an engaging



afternoon, marked with thought-provoking debates, speeches, cultural exchange and people to people interactions. Participating students enthusiastically reflected very well researched discourses on the leadership, vision, and enduring legacy of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, highlighting his valuable contributions for creation and laying foundation for progress & development of Pakistan. Students concluded that the positive impact of Quaid-e-Azam's personality, his iconic leadership and precious

teachings is everlasting, not confined to Pakistan but is relevant for generations to come, world wide.

In the end, the Chief guest awarded cash prizes and award certificates to the participating teams while the HC awarded mementoes to the Chief guest, VC MNU, Madam Shehnaaz, MNU students, judges and members of Pakistani community. The mission extended its sincere gratitude to all participants, organizers, judges, and attendees whose valuable contributions made the event a great success.