



Top EU diplomat says Pakistan a major regional power, 'important partner'



Kamal calls for accelerated public awareness campaign to eliminate Hepatitis C



First post-Hajj flight carrying 370 pilgrims lands in Islamabad

Founded By:
(Late) Rehmat Khan

ABC CERTIFIED

Email: editor.peakpoint@gmail.com
Website: www.peakpoint.pk

Executive Group Editor
Arif Mehmood Khan



Tuesday 02 June 2026

Zil Hajj 16, 1447 A.H VOI No: 06

Issue No. 107

Pages 4 Rs. 20

Pak-China business cooperation enters new phase as private sector links expand: PM

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, Monday, said that the extraordinary increase in business engagements between the private sectors of Pakistan and China heralded a new era in economic partnership between the two countries. He emphasized that enhanced industrial, agricultural and technological cooperation with China would boost Pakistan's exports and create new employment opportunities.

The prime minister chaired a review meeting to assess progress on the agreements and MoUs signed in the Pakistan-China Business-to-Business (B2B) conference held during his recent visit to

China, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

In the meeting, he directed the relevant authorities to ensure that the Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) signed during the B2B conference in Hangzhou should be transformed swiftly into formal agreements and joint ventures.

The meeting was attended by Ministers Rana Tanvir Hussain, Ahsan Iqbal, Ahmad Khan Cheema and Shaza Fatima Khawaja along with other senior government officials. The prime minister also decided to personally chair monthly review meetings to monitor progress on the outcomes of the B2B conference. He further instructed that cooperation.



ISLAMABAD: A delegation of senior leadership of chambers of commerce called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif

Budget proposals: Govt sets 4% growth and 8.2% inflation targets

PEAK POINT



ISLAMABAD: The federal government has proposed a series of ambitious economic targets for the 2026-27 fiscal year, including a four percent economic growth rate, an investment target of 15 percent of gross domestic product (GDP), and an inflation target of 8.2 percent.

The federal government plans to focus on strengthening economic activity across major sectors while maintaining efforts to control inflation and encourage investment.

Budget documents show that the government has proposed a four percent growth target for the next fiscal year.

The agriculture sector, which remains a key contributor to the economy, has been assigned a growth target of 3.8 percent. The industrial sector is expected to grow by four percent, while the services sector has been given a target of 4.2 percent. Large-scale manufacturing, regarded as an important indicator of industrial performance, is projected to expand by 4.5 percent during the fiscal year. The proposed budget framework also sets an overall investment target of 15 percent of GDP.

Tehran responds with air base attack after US strikes Iranian military sites

PEAK POINT



TEHRAN: The US said it struck Iranian military sites at the weekend and Iran's Revolutionary Guards said on Monday it had targeted a US base in response, the latest in a series of exchanges amid negotiations to end the three-month-old war.

The strikes on Iran's Gulf coast were in response to "aggressive Iranian actions that included the shoot-down of a US MQ-1 drone that was operating over international waters," the US Central Command said in a post on X.

"US fighter aircraft swiftly responded by eliminating Iranian air defences, a ground control station, and two one-way attack drones that posed clear threats to ships transiting regional waters," Centcom said, adding it will continue to protect US assets and interests during the ongoing ceasefire.

Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps said on Monday it had targeted an air base used by the US for an attack on southern Iran, without identifying which base.

Air defences in Kuwait, where a major US base is located, were intercepting missile and drone attacks on Monday as sirens sounded across the country, the state news agency KUNA reported, without providing further details.

The foreign ministry later said in a statement that it was "holding Iran fully responsible for these heinous attacks".

40 days on, Pakistani crew members remain held by Somali pirates

PEAK POINT



KARACHI: Nearly a dozen Pakistani crew members taken hostage by Somali pirates aboard an oil tanker remain in captivity 40 days after the vessel was

hijacked off the Somali coast.

According to diplomatic sources, the tanker, Honour 25, was seized by pirates on April 21 while sailing near Somalia. A total of 17 crew members were taken hostage, including 10 Pakistanis, four Indonesians, one Indian and one Myanmar national. The Ministry of Maritime Affairs had confirmed the incident, saying that immediate steps were initiated to ensure the safe recovery of the crew.

Despite efforts to secure their release, no crew members have been freed so far. Diplomatic sources said the vessel remains anchored off the Somali coast while negotiations continue.

According to the sources, the Somali government is communicating with the pirates through the owner of Honour 25 in an attempt to secure the release of the hostages. The pirates initially demanded a ransom of \$10 million before lowering their demand to \$4 million.

Islamabad notifies early market closure, again

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: The capital's administration has re-imposed restrictions on market timings, once again mandating their closure by 8pm throughout the week.

According to a late-night notification, issued by the Islamabad Capital Territory's district magistrate, all shops, markets and shopping malls will close at 8pm, while restaurants, tandoors, grocery stores, bakeries, meat, fruit and vegetable vendors are to close shop at 10pm. The notification said that marriage halls.

Bilawal demands simultaneous GB, AJK polls alongside country's general elections

PEAK POINT

GILGIT: Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari on Monday called for elections in Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir to be held simultaneously with country's general elections, saying it would strengthen public sovereignty. "True public sovereignty would only be ensured if elections in GB

were held alongside Pakistan's general elections," he said while addressing an election rally in Shigar's GBA-12 constituency as part of electioneering for the June 7 polls set to be held in the region. The PPP chief said that his party remained committed to securing the rights of the people of GB and ensuring transparent elections in the region. He urged voters to safeguard

their mandate and region should be allowed to expressed hope that no make their own decisions



seats would be "stolen" in the upcoming polls. Bilawal criticised what he described as an Islamabad-centric approach to governance, saying some political parties wanted to run GB, Gwadar and Karachi from the federal capital. "I want the decisions of Azad Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan to be made by you, not by a babu sitting in Islamabad," he said. He added that the people of the

region should be allowed to expressed hope that no make their own decisions

and argued that greater local authority would lead to economic progress. "If the people of Shigar are given authority, they will achieve economic development," he said. Referring to federal institutions, Bilawal said that if the federation was facing financial difficulties, it should first consider closing the ministries dealing with GB and AJK. The PPP chairman also

highlighted his party's welfare initiatives, including the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), and claimed that only the PPP could protect the scheme.

Bilawal alleged that other political parties wanted to "end the BISP in one way or another," warning against proposals to devolve the scheme to the provinces.

"Across the world, these responsibilities are undertaken by the federal government," he said, adding that handing BISP over to the provinces would amount to ending the programme.

According to Bilawal, he had promoted BISP as a successful welfare model during his tenure as foreign minister. "I used to tell Afghanistan to adopt the BISP as a model and help poor people," he said.

Aleema terms reports of Imran's meeting with ex-army chief 'totally fake'

PEAK POINT



ISLAMABAD: Aleema Khan, the sister of PTI founder Imran Khan, on Monday dismissed reports about the former premier's meeting with an ex-army chief at Adiala jail as "totally fake". "All the news circulating on social media that a former army chief met Imran Khan in Adiala jail [is] fake," she said in a post on the social media platform X. She said the claims had been verified with PTI Chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan, who also confirmed that "this is totally fake".

"It is disinformation, especially spread to distract from the fact that Imran is being tortured through total isolation," she said. She added that the claims were an attempt to distract from Imran not being provided proper treatment for his eye condition, not being allowed to speak to his sons, not being provided books.

SPORTS



Ireland register record T20I chase to defeat Pakistan



PEAK POINT
DUBLIN: Ireland Women produced a record-breaking run chase to defeat Pakistan Women by seven wickets in their third match of the Tri-Nation T20I Series at Clontarf on Sunday, thanks to impressive half-centuries from Amy Hunter and Rebecca Stokell. Chasing a challenging target of 177, Ireland reached 180-3 with an over to spare, completing the highest successful run chase in their women's T20 international history and bouncing back strongly after their opening defeat to the West Indies. Pakistan, who opted

to bat first after winning the toss, posted a competitive 176-6 in their allotted 20 overs. Opener Gull Feroza provided an explosive start, scoring 32 off just 15 balls after surviving an early dropped catch. However, she was eventually dismissed by Ava Canning with the score on 44. Ireland's fielding struggles continued with two more dropped chances, allowing Pakistan to build momentum. Opener Muneeba Ali anchored the innings superbly with 65 off 41 deliveries, while Saira Jabeen contributed a valuable 36-run knock. The pair shared a crucial partnership that

guided Pakistan to 145 before Muneeba was caught on the boundary by Rebecca Stokell, handing Elana Delzell her maiden international wicket. Captain Fatima Sana added 21 runs late in the innings as Pakistan finished on a formidable total. Ireland began their chase confidently, with Amy Hunter and Alana Delzell putting on 44 runs for the opening wicket. Although Delzell fell early, Hunter maintained the momentum, striking a fluent 56 off 43 balls for her sixth T20I half-century. The decisive partnership came between Hunter and Rebecca Stokell, before cap-

tain Orla Prendergast joined Stokell to add a match-winning 50-run stand for the third wicket. Stokell reached her maiden T20I fifty in style and remained unbeaten on 60 from 41 deliveries, guiding Ireland to victory. Prendergast provided the finishing touches with a rapid 33 off 17 balls, while Leah Paul remained unbeaten on four as Ireland comfortably crossed the target. The victory strengthens Ireland's position in the tri-series standings ahead of their next clash against unbeaten West Indies at Clontarf.

Ghazi Ghauri says team performance boosts confidence



PEAK POINT
LAHORE: Wicketkeeper-batter Mohammad Ghazi Ghauri has said that consistent performance not only strengthens individual confidence but also benefits the team as a whole. Speaking to the media at Gaddafi Stadium, Ghauri said he is focused on maintaining his form and contributing whenever given an opportunity. "If the performance benefits the team, it increases confidence. I will try to continue performing in the same way," he said. Ghauri praised senior batter Babar Azam for his role during the innings, saying that batting alongside experienced players adds confidence. "Babar Azam led the way during the innings. Batting with a player like him gives confidence and there is no pressure," he added. Clarifying his position in the squad, Ghauri said he does not see himself as a replacement for senior wicketkeeper Mohammad Rizwan. "It is not that I am replacing Mohammad Rizwan; he is the first choice," he stated. He said he is trying to make the most of the opportunities he receives in the national setup. "I got an opportunity and I am trying to take advantage of it," he said, adding that he continuously works on improving his weaknesses.

"I will fight for greater representation of football stakeholders in new PFF Constitution: PFF President

PEAK POINT
ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Football Federation (PFF) President Syed Mohsen Gilani has pledged to champion greater representation for football stakeholders in the Federation's new Constitution, while outlining an ambitious governance reform programme that will extend from the national federation to provincial and district football structures across Pakistan. Speaking at a press conference following a two-day governance workshop conducted by FIFA and the Asian Football Confederation (AFC), Gilani said the constitutional reform process presents a unique opportunity to build a more inclusive and representative



football system. "I am not interested in constitutional reforms that give me more power as President," Gilani said. "I will fight for greater representation of football stakeholders in the new PFF Constitution." Gilani stressed that the future governance structure should provide meaningful representation to all sectors of Pakistan football, including women's football, futsal, beach soccer, football, provincial football associations, clubs and other key stakeholders involved in the development of the game. The workshop was led by FIFA Head of Member Associations Governance Rolf Tanner and AFC Senior Manager of South Asia Unit, Member

Matt Kuhnemann hopes for spin-friendly conditions in Lahore

PEAK POINT
AUSTRALIA: Australian cricketer Matt Kuhnemann has said he is hopeful that Lahore will offer spin-friendly conditions similar to Rawalpindi, as his team prepares for the next matches of the series against Pakistan. Speaking to the media at Gaddafi Stadium, Kuhnemann noted that the pitch in Rawalpindi was slow and made batting challenging. "The pitch in Rawalpindi was quite slow and the ball was not coming well onto the bat," he said that Australia remains focused on playing ahead to future tour-



competitive cricket in the ongoing series. "We will try to play good cricket here," he stated. Reflecting on the first match, Kuhnemann praised Pakistan's bowling performance but suggested that a slightly higher total could have changed the outcome. "Pakistan bowled well in the first match. If we had scored 20 to 40 more runs, it would have been a good match," he remarked. The Australian batter said the team's immediate focus is on winning the series rather than looking ahead to future tour-

National Junior Championship 2026 to open in Peshawar on June 7



PEAK POINT
PESHAWAR: Preparations are in full swing for the National Junior Championship 2026 in Peshawar, with the formal opening ceremony scheduled to be held on June 7 at Qasim Sports Complex, Peshawar.

Muhammad Khan Taran, while talking to the media. Director Sports Tashfeen Haider and Director Operations Jamshed Baloch were also present on the occasion. The championship is being organized under the Directorate General of Sports. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has 952 talented male and female athletes from all four provinces and different government departments will participate in the event. Competitions will be held in squash, table tennis, athletics, badminton, karate and volleyball. Separate competitions for male and female players have been arranged in all sports, while volleyball competitions will be held for men only. Taj Muhammad Khan Taran urged young players to consider the championship a valuable opportunity and fully demonstrate their hidden talent in the field. He said the youth should work with dedication to bring honour not only to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa but also to their respective provinces and the whole of Pakistan.

Fifa, AFC stress urgent revision of PFF constitution

PEAK POINT
KARACHI: Fifa and the Asian Football Confederation have stressed the need for the Pakistan Football Federation to revise its constitution and bring it in line with international governance standards, warning that third-party interference in the federation's affairs will not be tolerated. The message was delivered during the first day of the Governance and Statutes Revision Workshop held on Sunday, where FIFA's Head of Member Associations Governance, Rolf Tanner, and AFC Development Officer Sonam Jigmi addressed members of the PFF Congress. The workshop forms part of efforts to update the PFF constitution,



which was last comprehensively revised in 2014. While some amendments were introduced ahead of last year's PFF elections conducted under the Fifa-appointed Normalisation Committee, Fifa and AFC believe a broader review is now necessary. Addressing the participants, Tanner emphasised the importance of good governance and highlighted the need for a clear separation of powers between the federation's legislative, executive and judicial bodies. "The distinction of powers ensures a system of checks and balances that reduces the risk of corruption," Tanner said. The workshop also focused on key governance principles, including avoiding conflicts of interest, promoting gender equality and ensuring competence in football administration.

IRS-SIF holds high-level dialogue on examining 'Climate Change Strategies'

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: The Institute of Regional Studies (IRS), in collaboration with Secours Islamique France (SIF)-Pakistan, organized a high-level Science-Policy Dialogue titled "From Global Stocktake to Implementation: Catalyzing Effective Climate Action" to examine pathways for translating global climate commitments into practical and regionally relevant implementation strategies. The dialogue brought together representatives from international organizations, government institutions, development agencies, academia, and civil society to deliberate on the evolving climate governance landscape following the first Global Stocktake (GST) under the Paris Agreement and subsequent international

climate negotiations. Speaking at the event, Ambassador Jauhar Saleem, President IRS, highlighted the urgency of climate action, noting that Pakistan remains highly vulnerable to climate-induced disasters despite its minimal contribution to global emissions. He stressed that climate change, water scarcity, environmental degradation, population growth, and sustainable development are interconnected challenges requiring a comprehensive national strategy. He also emphasized stronger climate financing, resilient infrastructure, public awareness, and coordinated governance to build long-term resilience. Mr. Shiraz Shah, Assistant Resident Representative, UNDP Pakistan, emphasized translating policy commitments into effective delivery mechanisms



and resilient governance systems for long-term climate adaptation and sustainable development. He highlighted stronger institutional coordination, locally driven solutions, integrated policy frameworks, and partnerships among governments, development institutions, and communities to advance inclusive climate resilience. Mr. Thomas Conan, Deputy Country Director, WFP Pakistan, highlighted growing climate threats to food security and stressed resilient food systems, climate-smart agriculture, anticipatory action, and stronger social protection mechanisms to address vulnerabilities affecting agriculture, livelihoods, and supply chains. Mr. Muhammad Arif Goheer, Executive Director, GCISC, outlined Pakistan's climate vulnerabilities, including extreme weather events, glacial melt, water stress, and rising temperatures. He emphasized sci-

ence-based planning, stronger climate data systems, research, and institutional capacities for informed policymaking and long-term adaptation. Mr. Amir Khan Goraya, CEO, NDRMF, underscored the importance of risk financing, institutional strengthening, and innovative financing mechanisms to scale climate resilience. He stressed sustained investments in preparedness, disaster risk reduction, community-level adaptation, and stronger coordination among public institutions, development partners, and financial actors. Concluding the session, Dr. Altaf Abro, Head of Mission, SIF Pakistan, stressed enhanced climate governance, innovative risk financing, and stronger partnerships to address humanitarian and environmental challenges. He called for

integrated efforts among government institutions, academia, development partners, the private sector, and local communities, while underscoring the importance of green technologies and practical climate solutions. Dr. Anjum Rasheed, Head of the Climate Resilience Program at IRS, noted that the first Global Stocktake concluded at COP28 in 2023 marked a historic assessment of collective climate progress. She observed that the world remains off-track in limiting warming to 1.5°C, with widening adaptation gaps and inadequate climate finance for vulnerable countries. She stressed the need to accelerate implementation, strengthen NDCs, scale up climate finance, and enhance international cooperation.

Committee urges safer legal migration channels as undocumented workers face exploitation

NADEEM TANOLI

ISLAMABAD: The Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs of the National Assembly has raised urgent concerns over irregular migration and human trafficking networks exploiting Pakistani citizens seeking work in Europe. During a session chaired by Ms. Hina Rabbani Khar, MNA, the Committee reviewed the ongoing Spain Regularisation Initiative, emphasizing that thousands of undocumented

Pakistanis could be at risk if legal pathways are not strengthened. The Committee termed the initiative a critical opportunity for Pakistanis already residing and working in Spain but highlighted the dangerous alternative routes used by smugglers, which expose vulnerable workers to exploitation and potential deportation. The Foreign Secretary acknowledged the Chairperson's proactive efforts in promoting dialogue on lawful migration pathways to

Europe, noting her role in keeping migration issues prominent in institutional and diplomatic forums. Officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs briefed the Committee on facilitation measures undertaken in coordination with Pakistani missions abroad, the National Police Bureau, and the Ministry of Interior. These measures include expedited issuance of police clearance certificates, passports, visas, and other documentation. According to the briefing,

thousands of Pakistanis have already benefited from the facilitation process, but the Committee stressed that outreach must be expanded to educate citizens nationwide about the dangers of illegal migration. Ms. Khar warned that Europe's tightening migration policies require Pakistan to act swiftly to secure lawful economic opportunities for its citizens. She praised the Government of Spain for opening legal avenues for migrant regularisation, emphasizing that such ini-

tiatives not only protect workers from exploitation but also integrate them into formal economic systems. Committee members also called for targeted awareness campaigns to inform potential migrants about safe and legal procedures. In addition to migration issues, the Committee scrutinized diplomatic postings and transfers within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Foreign Secretary provided details on tenure policies, institutional requirements, and operational

challenges in managing diplomatic assignments. The Committee emphasized merit based appointments, professionalism, and the importance of institutional continuity for specialized expertise. Training programs for Ministry officers were also highlighted, with the Chairperson stressing exposure to internationally recognized training and modern diplomatic capacity building programs to strengthen Pakistan's foreign service.

Opinion & Editorial

Arif Mehmood Khan
Group Editor: 0333-5366814

Samra Athar Kakakhel
Resident Editor

Nadim Tanoli
Joint Editor: Mob-0301-777874

Email: editor.peakpoint@gmail.com
www.peakpoint.pk

India Pakistan Tension Over the Indus River: Water, Power, and the Politics of Survival

Mahrubk Ashfaq

The dispute between India and Pakistan over the Indus River has turned into a big problem in South Asia. The river is crucial for both countries because many people rely on it for water, farming, and generating electricity. Recently, the growing political conflict between the two nations has made people more worried about how water will be shared in the future.

like wheat, rice, sugarcane, and cotton. Experts warn that a big drop in water supply could cause serious economic and food issues for the country. The situation has gotten worse since political tensions increased between India and Pakistan over Kashmir and other security issues. Strong statements from both countries' leaders have made people fear that water might become a new part of the political conflict. Some Pakistani leaders have said that stopping water flow would be seen as an attack. At the same time, some Indian political groups are pushing for more control over river resources.

ation is necessary because millions of people depend on the river system. They also think updating the treaty through discussion could help deal with modern challenges like climate change and population growth. International organizations are also concerned about the growing tensions. Analysts say the Indus Waters Treaty has lasted over sixty years because both countries recognized the importance of water cooperation. They warn that breaking this agreement could lead to more instability in the region.

The Indus River system consists of six major rivers: Indus, Jhelum, Chenab, Ravi, Beas, and Sutlej. In 1960, India and Pakistan agreed on the Indus Waters Treaty with the help of the World Bank. Under this treaty, Pakistan was given control of the western rivers: Indus, Jhelum, and Chenab. India was allowed to manage the eastern rivers: Ravi, Beas, and Sutlej. This agreement is seen as one of the most successful water-sharing deals in the world because it has lasted even though wars and political disagreements.

Ordinary people on both sides are also anxious. Pakistan's farmers fear water shortages, while people in India support development projects that bring electricity and economic benefits. Many citizens believe that peaceful relations and proper water management are essential for the future of South Asia. In short, the Indus River issue is more than just a water problem. It is now tied to politics, security, climate change, and regional stability. Although tensions continue between India and Pakistan, experts think that working together and having open discussions are the best ways to solve the problem. The Indus River supports millions of lives, and both countries need to carefully manage the situation to avoid things getting worse.

Experts say that India can't completely stop Pakistan's water supply without building huge dams and storage systems. However, even small changes in water flow or delays in sharing information can cause problems for farmers and local communities. Because of this, many people in Pakistan are worried about what the future holds. Climate change is also making the situation harder. South Asia is already dealing with floods, droughts, and rising temperatures. The glaciers in the Himalayas, which supply water to the Indus River, are melting because of global warming. Scientists warn that climate change might reduce water availability in the future and increase competition over natural resources.

But in recent years, disagreements over water projects and dams have caused new tensions. India has been constructing hydroelectric projects on rivers that flow into Pakistan. Indian officials say these projects are allowed under the treaty and are important for development and power. Pakistan, however, is worried that these projects might reduce the water flowing into its area, which could hurt farming and daily life. Pakistan is very much dependent on the Indus River system. Most of its farming is based on river water. Farmers use this water to grow crops

Many experts believe that both countries should solve the issue through peaceful talks instead of using political pressure. Water experts say cooperation

is necessary because millions of people depend on the river system. They also think updating the treaty through discussion could help deal with modern challenges like climate change and population growth. International organizations are also concerned about the growing tensions. Analysts say the Indus Waters Treaty has lasted over sixty years because both countries recognized the importance of water cooperation. They warn that breaking this agreement could lead to more instability in the region. Ordinary people on both sides are also anxious. Pakistan's farmers fear water shortages, while people in India support development projects that bring electricity and economic benefits. Many citizens believe that peaceful relations and proper water management are essential for the future of South Asia. In short, the Indus River issue is more than just a water problem. It is now tied to politics, security, climate change, and regional stability. Although tensions continue between India and Pakistan, experts think that working together and having open discussions are the best ways to solve the problem. The Indus River supports millions of lives, and both countries need to carefully manage the situation to avoid things getting worse.

'The truth is still out there'

Asad Baig

LOOK at that thing, dude. My gosh. There's a whole fleet of them. They're all going against the wind ... look at that thing. It's rotating." While this may sound like a scene from a sci-fi film, these were the voices of US Navy aviators reacting to an object detected by military sensors, in footage later known as Gimbal. The Pentagon formally released that video, along with two others, in 2020, confirming that they showed what it described as unidentified aerial phenomena.

In May 2026, the Pentagon began releasing more declassified UAP material in batches through the Presidential Unsealing and Reporting System for UAP Encounters, known as PURSUE — hundreds of files and more than 50 videos, including historical records of "green orbs", "disks" and "fireballs", as well as newer military-linked footage. This, in its simplest form, is known as the unidentified anomalous phenomena.

"UAP" is the modern bureaucratic term for what the world once called Unidentified Flying Objects, UFOs. The shift in language is deliberate. UFO came carrying decades of cultural baggage: flying saucers, little green men, crashed discs, secret hangars, conspiracy radio and late-night documentaries. The term "UAP" gives the state a way to talk about the mystery without surrendering to the mythology.

But the public does not hear it that way. For UAP enthusiasts, an object trained pilots cannot identify, detected by military systems, moving against the wind or rotating in unusual ways, is not a neutral bureaucratic category. It is the oldest question in a new form: are we alone? And, perhaps, for good reason.

The existence of UAPs does not automatically mean they are alien. It means they are unresolved. For decades, the question of UFOs, now UAPs, was made ridiculous before it was examined. The official history of UFO inquiry is full of this contradiction. Courtesy Davn

Borrowing binge

Pakistan's foreign borrowing surged a jaw-dropping 83 per cent in the first ten months of the current fiscal year, with the government securing nearly \$11 billion in external loans - \$5 billion more than during the same period last year. The increase is driven almost entirely by the fallout from Donald Trump and Benjamin Netanyahu's Persian misadventure. In fact, the month of April - coinciding with the start of the war - alone witnessed a nearly sevenfold increase. But even though the cause may be something beyond the government's control, resolving the brewing trouble will be impossible without good governance and precision policymaking. The primary driver of borrowing remains debt servicing, with external repayments expected to reach almost \$13 billion by the end of the year, compared to about \$8 billion last year. There was some optimism that we might be able to break out of the debt refinancing loop - borrowing to service existing obligations - on the back of solid current account surpluses, but the spike in energy prices and its impact on the trade deficit have erased all of our gains. Without getting our accounts in order, it will be impossible for the government to invest the kind of amounts needed to improve socioeconomic conditions.

Top EU diplomat says Pakistan a major regional power, 'important partner'



PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: The European Union's (EU) top diplomat, Kaja Kallas, on Monday termed Pakistan a major regional power and an important partner of the EU as the two sides held a strategic dialogue in Islamabad. Kallas, who serves as vice-president of the European Commission and the EU high representative for foreign affairs and security policy (HR/VP), is visiting Pakistan at the invitation of Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar. Both co-chaired the 8th EU-Pakistan Strategic Dialogue, which is the highest-level platform for structured discussion between the two sides. Addressing a

joint press conference, Kallas said, "Pakistan is a major regional power and an important partner for the European Union. "Today, in our strategic dialogue, we affirmed our shared commitment to strengthening EU-Pakistan ties even further," she stated. Kallas pointed out that the EU remained "by far Pakistan's largest export destination", adding that it was larger than the US and China combined.

She further said Pakistan was the "world's leading beneficiary" of the EU's Generalised Scheme of Preferences Plus (GSP+).

At the same time, Kallas stressed: "But GSP+ has clear conditions.

Continued preferential access to the EU market depends on progress in implementing the international conventions underpinning the scheme. "This includes good governance, environmental protection and particularly, labour and human rights. We look to Pakistan to demonstrate tangible progress on these issues." During their meeting, Dar and Kallas "acknowledged the positive trajectory of Pakistan-EU ties and agreed to further strengthen the mutually beneficial partnership", the FO said. "The two leaders also exchanged views [on] regional and global developments, ahead of the 8th Pakistan-EU Strategic Dialogue which is being held subsequently," it added. In opening remarks before the dialogue, Dar said, "We have a great relationship with the EU; there is a great history.

Pakistan sees considerable untapped potential in our cooperation." He noted, "We have a number of areas where we can work together, particularly trade and many other areas." Dar stressed the need to maintain a frequency of six months' gap in strategic dialogues, as was the case between the current and the last dialogue.

Kamal calls for accelerated public awareness campaign to eliminate Hepatitis C

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination Syed Mustafa Kamal stressed the need to accelerate public awareness campaigns to maximize screening for Hepatitis C, urging citizens to avail themselves of free testing facilities available at health centres in Islamabad. He expressed these views while chairing a review meeting on the ongoing pilot project in capital aimed at eliminating Hepatitis C here, according to the Ministry of Health on Monday. The meeting was attended by the Federal Secretary for Health, the Head of Hospitals, and the District Health Officer (DHO) Islamabad. "The success of this programme is not possible without public cooperation," the minister said. During the meeting, participants conduct-



ed a detailed review of the challenges facing Hepatitis C screening and elimination efforts. Kamal noted that Pakistan continues to bear a high burden of Hepatitis C cases and reaffirmed the government's commitment to eliminate the disease by mobilising all available resources. "Effective measures must be accelerated to eliminate Hepatitis C," he said, emphasizing the need to ensure screening of the maximum number of people.

Describing the eradication of Hepatitis C as a national cause, the minister directed.

Abbasi directs accelerated reforms to enhance Pakistan Railways' efficiency, passenger services

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Railways Muhammad Hanif Abbasi Monday reaffirmed the government's commitment to providing safe, comfortable and punctual travel facilities to the public, saying that passenger welfare remains the foremost priority of Pakistan Railways.

Chairing a high-level meeting to review the operational performance of Pakistan Railways, ongoing reform initiatives and future development plans, he directed officials to adopt effective strategies aimed at further strengthening the railway system and improving operational efficiency.

During the meeting, a comprehensive review of railway



operations and the department's overall performance was conducted.

Senior officials briefed the minister on the progress of various operational, administrative and development projects, as well as the performance of different railway divisions across the country. The meeting also discussed a range of proposals focused on enhancing passenger convenience, improving service quality and raising travel standards.

First post-Hajj flight carrying 370 pilgrims lands in Islamabad

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: The first post-Hajj flight carrying 370 Pakistani pilgrims landed at Islamabad International Airport on Monday, marking the beginning of the return phase of Hajj 2026.

The pilgrims, who belonged to different parts of the country, arrived after completing their religious journey in Saudi Arabia.

They were warmly received at the airport by Federal Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Dr Tariq Fazal Chaudhry.

Speaking to the media on the occasion, Dr Tariq Fazal Chaudhry said that a total of 180,000 Pakistanis performed Hajj this year, including 120,000 through the government scheme and 60,000 through private operators. He said the returning pilgrims expressed satisfaction over the arrangements made by the Ministry of Religious Affairs for Hajj 2026, particularly in terms of accommodation, travel, and other facilities in the holy cities.

He added that it was a matter of satisfaction that all pilgrims were able to perform Hajj smoothly this year.

Dr Tariq Fazal Chaudhry further said that some pilgrims from the previous year, despite having paid their dues, could not travel due to administrative issues.

However, this year all such cases were resolved, and no additional charges were taken, as arrangements were managed within the previously collected funds. He also appreciated Federal Minister for Religious Affairs Sardar Muhammad Yousof and his team for their efforts in ensuring effective Hajj management. He acknowledged that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif closely monitored the arrangements and continuously issued directives to ensure maximum facilitation for pilgrims. He said the successful organization of Hajj and the smooth return of pilgrims reflected the coordinated efforts of all relevant departments.

PMD forecasts rain, thunderstorms in upper parts of country from June 2-5

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: The upper parts of the country are expected to experience dust storms and thunderstorms from June 2, which are likely to persist until June 5, the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) said on Monday. "A westerly wave is likely to approach the upper parts of the country" during the forecast period, PMD said in an advisory. In Punjab and Islamabad, scattered dust storms and thunderstorms with rain are expected, with isolated heavy falls and hailstorms at a few places, in Islamabad/ Rawalpindi, Murree, Chakliyat, Attock, Gallawal, Jhelum, Mandi Bahauddin, Gujrat, Gujranwala, Hafizabad, Wazirabad, Lahore, Sheikhupura, Sialkot, Narowal, Sahiwal, Jhang, Toba Tek Singh, Nankana Sahib, Chiniot, Faisalabad, Okara, Kasur, Khushab, Sargodha, Bhakkar, Mianwali, Bahawalpur, Bahawalnagar, D.G. Khan, Multan, Khaneval, Lodhran, Muzaffargarh, Rajanpur.

Chairman Senate Pays Tribute to Parents on Global Parents Day

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate, Syed Yousof Raza Gilani, paid rich tribute to parents on the occasion of Global Parents Day, recognizing their love, sacrifices, and role in shaping future generations and strengthening society. In his message, the Chairman Senate said that parents are the true foundation of nations, as their love, care, and upbringing play a vital role in the moral and social development of individuals. He emphasized that Islam grants a highly respected status to parents and regards their respect, obedience, and service as a religious obligation. Syed Yousof Raza Gilani noted that the teachings of



the Holy Quran and Sunnah strongly emphasize kindness, humility, and good conduct towards parents. He said caring for parents, particularly in their old age, is a great virtue and a source of blessings. The Chairman Senate urged the younger generation to acknowledge the sacrifices made by their parents and promote a culture of respect and gratitude within society.



Federal Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Dr Tariq Fazal Chaudhry welcomes Hajj pilgrims returning from Saudi Arabia at Islamabad Airport.

Ahsan stresses prioritisation of development projects amid fiscal constraints

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal on Monday stressed the need to prioritise and complete ongoing development projects, saying limited fiscal space and a growing throw-forward had made it impossible to fund all schemes under the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP). Addressing the Annual Plan Coordination Committee (APCC) meeting for the 2026-27 budget, the minister said the country's development budget was insufficient to finance pro-

jects promptly, describing the situation as a major challenge for the planning process. He said the government would have to increase development spending in the long run while ensuring that priority projects were completed and removed from the development portfolio. Ahsan said some less important projects might not be continued due to resource constraints, adding that the completion of ongoing programmes remained the government's foremost priority. He said Pakistan's economy was on a path to recovery and that the government would continue its efforts to provide relief to

the common man through effective development planning. Highlighting the scale of the challenge, the minister said the federal development portfolio carried a throw-forward of around Rs10 trillion, while ministries had sought nearly Rs4 trillion for ongoing projects.

He said ministries had projects worth Rs3,377 trillion under implementation and had also proposed around 720 new schemes, besides submitting more than 5,500 additional project proposals for consideration.

He said against total development demands of Rs4,097 trillion, the Ministry

of Finance had allocated only Rs1.126 trillion for the PSDP 2026-27, leaving an unmet demand of about Rs3 trillion.

"This means we have to allocate Rs1.126 trillion against demands exceeding Rs4 trillion selectively," he said, adding that many important projects could not be accommodated within the available fiscal envelope despite their significance for national development. Ahsan termed the situation a major dilemma for the Ministry of Planning, saying development allocations were being made within a shrinking budget despite growing infrastructure and social sec-

tor needs.

The minister said the PSDP allocation of Rs1.126 trillion included Rs125 billion earmarked for the N-25 Highway project in Balochistan, which, he said, was a non-negotiable priority identified by the Prime Minister and would be completed at all costs.

He said around Rs87 billion had been set aside for projects proposed by coalition partners, while approximately Rs100 billion had been earmarked for development initiatives in Balochistan.

A further Rs153 billion, he said, had been allocated

for Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) and the merged districts.

He said these funds ideally should be transferred through the National Finance Commission (NFC) mechanism, but in the absence of a consensus arrangement, they continued to be financed from the federal government's share.

The minister said nearly Rs70 billion had been allocated for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)-related initiatives.

Explaining the financial constraints further, he said the remaining fiscal