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## PM says upcoming budget to provide public relief, reaffirms export-led growth strategy

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday said the upcoming FY2026-27 federal budget would include measures aimed at providing relief to the public while advancing the government's export-led growth agenda. He said the government was pursuing an export-led growth strategy, which was the central pillar of the economic policy. Talking to the leading industrialists and prominent business leaders at the PM House, the prime minister underscored that measures were being taken to bring the informal economy into the tax net. Welcoming the business leaders, the prime minister said that they were Pakistan's ambassadors and represent the country's

identity around the world. "We are grateful to the business community for supporting the government during difficult economic conditions," he said adding that a strong partnership between the government and the private sector was the guarantee of economic growth. He said consultation with the business community was of critical importance in economic policymaking. The meeting was held in the context of consultations with the business community regarding the upcoming FY 2026-27 budget and efforts to accelerate the country's overall economic growth. The delegation included Mian Muhammad Mansha, Arif Habib, Atif Bajwa, Muhammad Ali Tappa, Musaddiq Zulfqarain, Ziaad Bashir, Shahzad Saleem, Zeelaaf Munir.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs progress review meeting on sectoral reforms.

## Iran drone and missile attack hits Kuwait airport, state news agency says

PEAK POINT



DUBAI: An Iranian drone and missile attack struck Kuwait's international airport early on Wednesday, causing injuries and forcing authorities to divert flights, Kuwait's state news agency reported. The attack caused "severe damage" to the airport's T1 building, the report said, citing the General Civil Aviation Authority.

The US military earlier said two Iranian missiles fired at Kuwait fell short or broke apart en route, and three missiles launched at Bahrain were intercepted by US and Bahraini forces.

US Central Command added that Iran launched ballistic missiles toward regional neighbours but all failed to hit targets.

US forces conducted strikes on Qeshm Island in response to attempted attacks by Iran and defeated multiple Iranian ballistic missiles and drones.

## Trump says Iran has agreed to not have a nuclear weapon

MAHPARA ZAMAN



NEW YORK: US President Donald Trump said on Wednesday that Iran has agreed to not have a nuclear weapon and that Iran's Ayatollah is involved in negotiations with the United States. "They've already agreed they're not going to have a nuclear weapon," Trump told the New York Post's Pod

Force One podcast on Wednesday, while speaking about Iran. According to Trump, Iran's Ayatollah is "involved in negotiations" and "giving approval in talks". He added that he may meet with the Ayatollah at some point. Trump said that the Iran situation is "rapidly evolving", and "will be very good". Trump also added in the interview that there is currently no need for "boots on the ground." Iran's Foreign Ministry condemned on Wednesday what it described as US attacks on an Iranian oil tanker in the Strait of Hormuz and a telecommunications tower on Qeshm Island, saying they violated a ceasefire understanding and international law. The ministry said Kuwait and Bahrain bore "direct and clear responsibility" for the attacks, alleging their territory and facilities had been used to support US military operations against Iran. Tehran said it reserved the right to self-defence and would use all available means to respond, including by targeting the source of any future attacks. Iran has accused the US "terrorist army" of stoking Gulf tensions by attacking a commercial vessel and a communications tower while warning nations that allow their territory to be used to launch strikes, according to Al Jazeera.

## Iran alleges Kuwait and Bahrain directly involved in US attacks

PEAK POINT



IRAN: Iran has accused Kuwait and Bahrain of being directly involved in recent US military actions against the country, while senior Iranian political and military officials have issued fresh warnings to Washington amid escalating regional tensions.

According to a statement issued on Wednesday, Esmail Baghaei, spokesperson for Iran's Foreign Ministry, alleged that Kuwait and Bahrain were directly implicated in the US attacks on Iranian targets. Baghaei said the American strikes constituted a violation of the ceasefire agreement and warned that Iran would respond forcefully to any future attacks. He also condemned what he described as attacks on an oil tanker and on Iran's Qeshm Island, claiming that a telecommunications tower on the island had been targeted. Meanwhile, Ebrahim Rezaei, spokesperson for the Iranian Parliament's National Security Committee, renewed criticism of the United States, arguing that Washington preferred military force over diplomacy. In a post on X, he said recent events had shown that the United States understood.

## LHC dismisses convicts' pleas in Motorway gang rape case

PEAK POINT

LAHORE: The Lahore High Court (LHC) on Wednesday dismissed appeals filed by convicts Abid Malhi and Shafiqat Bagga against their convictions and death sentences in the Motorway gang rape case, upholding the punishment awarded by the trial court.

A two-member bench headed by Justice Syed Shahbaz Ali Rizvi announced the reserved verdict on the appeals. The court upheld the death sentences awarded to both convicts for the rape offence. An Anti-Terrorism Court had sentenced Abid Malhi and Shafiqat Bagga.

## Centre notifies new austerity timings for businesses, seeks provincial compliance

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: The federal government on Wednesday notified new restriction timings imposed under the fuel conservation and additional austerity measures for businesses, asking the provincial governments to implement the same. According to an official notification issued on Wednesday, shops, markets, malls and general retail outlets will now close at 9pm, while restaurants, cafes and eateries will be allowed to operate until 11pm. The decision was taken during a meeting of the Committee for Monitoring and Implementation of Austerity Measures, chaired by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar on Tuesday. Under the revised schedule, takeaway and delivery services will remain exempt from the restrictions. Marriage halls

and event venues, however, will continue to close at 10pm, with no changes to their current operating hours.



Essential services such as pharmacies, hospitals, fuel stations, and IT and telecom services will also remain exempt from the updated closing-hour regulations. The committee further instructed provincial governments to ensure the effective enforcement of the guidelines in coordination with federal authorities. Meanwhile, uncertainty persists as provincial govern-

ments have yet to notify revised business closure timings within their respective jurisdictions, despite the federal government's announcement of new restrictions. It is to be noted here that the federal and provincial governments imposed restrictions on business operating hours across the country in April as part of energy conservation measures introduced in response to a sharp rise in domestic fuel prices trig-

gered by tensions in the Middle East. The restrictions formed part of the federal government's broader austerity and fuel-conservation strategy aimed at reducing energy consumption amid escalating fuel costs.

However, the measures were temporarily eased last month ahead of Eid ul Adha, which was observed from May 27 to 29.

On May 18, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif approved a nationwide exemption from business closure timings until May 31, allowing commercial centres to operate without the previously imposed restrictions.

The decision came after similar relaxations were announced by provincial administrations. In Punjab, authorities extended relaxed operating hours for markets and commercial centres.

## No need for physical custody of Pinky due to security concerns, says court



PEAK POINT

KARACHI: Pronouncing a decision in the case of producing drug dealer Anmol alias Pinky in the court, a judicial magistrate in Karachi-South on Wednesday said there was no need for physical custody of the woman due to security reasons unless the challan was submitted.

However, the magistrate directed the jail superintendent to produce the drug dealer in court whenever summoned by the judge.

The police had sought the court's permission for producing Pinky in court via a video link.

The Force had argued that the production of the accused in court could create law and order situation.



# SPORTS



## No Pakistani batter in Test top 10 as ICC rankings released



PEAK POINT

DUBAI: The International Cricket Council (ICC) has released its latest One-Day International (ODI) and Test rankings, with Pakistan's leading players recording a mixed set of results across batting, bowling and all-rounder categories.

In the ODI batting rankings, Babar Azam retained his sixth position, remaining Pakistan's highest-ranked batter in the format. Meanwhile, Salman Ali Agha dropped five places to 14th in the latest update.

Pakistan's bowlers enjoyed notable progress. Shaheen Shah Afridi climbed four places to 13th

in the ODI bowling rankings and also improved two positions to reach 23rd among ODI all-rounders.

Abrar Ahmed rose to fourth place in the ODI bowling rankings, while making a significant jump of 18 places to 44th in the ODI all-rounders' standings.

In Test cricket, no Pakistani batter currently features among the top 10 batters in the world. However, Mohammad Rizwan moved up one place to 20th, while Babar Azam climbed to 21st in the latest Test batting rankings.

Among Test bowlers, Noman Ali retained his seventh position.

Globally, New Zealand's Daryl Mitchell maintained the top spot in the ODI batting rankings.

Australia's Travis Head slipped two places to 15th, while Cameron Green advanced five positions to 63rd. Australia's Matthew Renshaw recorded one of the biggest gains, leaping 102 places to reach 78th in the ODI batting rankings.

In ODI bowling, Afghanistan's Rashid Khan retained the number one ranking. Australia's Josh Hazlewood fell four places to ninth, while Nathan Ellis surged 24 positions to 44th.

Among ODI all-rounders, Afghanistan's Azmatullah

Omarzai continued to hold the top position.

In the Test batting rankings, England's Joe Root remained at number one. New Zealand's Rachin Ravindra climbed two places to ninth, while teammate Tom Blundell advanced eight spots to 40th.

India's Jasprit Bumrah retained the top ranking among Test bowlers, while Australia's Pat Cummins moved up one place to third. New Zealand bowlers Blair Tuckner and Nathan Smith also registered significant gains, climbing to 54th and 59th respectively.

## Decisive ODI between Pakistan and Australia to be played today



PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: The ABS Developers National T20 Cup 2025-26 will conclude with a highly anticipated final between Karachi Region Whites and Abbottabad Region at Gaddafi Stadium on Sunday, 7 June.

The title-deciding match will begin at 8pm, with fans expected to turn out in large numbers to witness the culmination of the domestic tournament. Mohsin Naqvi will attend the final as the chief guest.

Both teams secured their places in the final after strong performances during the group stage, which was held between 7 March and 16 March. Karachi Whites and Abbottabad each finished at the top of their respective groups, underlining their consistency throughout the competition. In the semi-finals played on 17 March, Karachi Whites booked their place in the final with a victory over Sialkot Region. The second semi-final between Abbottabad and Lahore Region Whites was abandoned due to rain after the completion of the first innings. Abbottabad advanced to the final on the basis of a superior position in the group-stage standings, earning the right to compete for the championship. With both sides having displayed impressive form throughout the tournament, an exciting contest is expected as Karachi Whites and Abbottabad battle for the National T20 Cup title in Lahore.

## Pakistan outwit Bangladesh 5-2 to qualify for U-18 Asia Cup semifinals



PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan made a dominant start, opening the scoring as early as the third minute through Abdullah, who returned later in the match to double his personal tally. Adeel, Asam and Muhammad Yahya contributed one goal each to complete a commanding five-goal haul. Bangladesh pulled back through

Tarik Islam and Monna Islam, but team management never threatened to overturn Pakistan's discipline, determination and quality of play. He credited the achievement to the tireless efforts of players, coaches and support staff, who he said were working with singular focus to restore Pakistan hockey's lost glory on the international stage.

Muhammad Yahya said he was working with singular focus to restore Pakistan hockey's lost glory on the international stage. Pakistan outwit Bangladesh 5-2 to qualify for U-18 Asia Cup semifinals.

In the semifinals, Pakistan will face arch-rivals India on June 5 in what promises to be a fiercely contested and eagerly anticipated showdown.

Pakistan Hockey Federation (PHF) President Mohyuddin Ahmad Wani congratulated the players and the team, praising their discipline, determination and quality of play. He credited the achievement to the tireless efforts of players, coaches and support staff, who he said were working with singular focus to restore Pakistan hockey's lost glory on the international stage.



SARGODHA: An athlete participates in the long jump event during the Inter-District Athletics Championship organized by the Divisional Sports Department at the Sports Stadium.

## Five Pakistan players selected at Lanka Premier League 2026 players draft

PEAK POINT

DUBAI: Five Pakistan cricketers were selected by different franchises in the Lanka Premier League (LPL) 2026 players draft held on Monday, with a total of six Pakistani players now set to feature in the upcoming season.

All-rounder Mohammad Nawaz was picked by Galle Gallants in the platinum overseas category, alongside left-arm pacer Akif Javed, who was selected in the gold category.

Colombo Kaps secured two Pakistani players, with wicketkeeper-batter Mohammad Haris picked in the classic category and fast bowler Shahnawaz Dahani added in the gold category.

Dambulla Sixers selected pacer Mohammad Wasim Jr in the gold category. The franchise had earlier signed Sahibzada Farhan as an overseas icon pre-draft, taking the

total number of Pakistan players in the tournament to six.

The LPL 2026 will run from July 17 to August 8, featuring five franchises —



Jaffna Kings, Colombo Kaps, Dambulla, followed by Kandy. The league stage will then return to Colombo, with the knockout matches and final scheduled at the R. Premadasa Stadium. A reserve day has been set aside for the final on August 9.

## Virtual taekwondo to feature at 2026 Asian Games





# NIRM under scrutiny: 159,615 patients served annually amid claims of resource mismanagement and access gaps

NADEEM TANOLI

ISLAMABAD: The National Institute of Rehabilitation Medicine (NIRM), Pakistan's premier facility for medical and surgical rehabilitation of persons with disabilities (PWDs), is facing scrutiny over its operational capacity, budget utilization, and patient accessibility despite annual inflows of over 159,615 outpatients. Questions have emerged regarding transparency, oversight, and equitable access as the institute relies heavily on federal grants and Pakistan Bait ul Maal subsidies to provide free treatment to nearly 99.99% of its patients. Dr. Murtaza Haider, Executive Director of NIRM, briefed oversight authorities that the institute, operating under the

Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination, caters to an expanding catchment area spanning Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Azad Jammu & Kashmir (AJK), Gilgit Baltistan (GB), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), and Punjab. Established by presidential order in 1988, the institute's outpatient department (OPD) has seen a dramatic rise in patient numbers, from 4,342 in 1997 to an estimated 159,615 per year in 2026, reflecting both population growth and rising demand for rehabilitation services. The Senate Standing Committee on National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination raised concerns over alleged inconsistencies in reporting and classification of services.

Discrepancies in "outdoor" surgical reporting prompted repeated clarifications by Dr. Haider, who confirmed that the institute provides both inpatient care, averaging 7 to 8 weeks for intensive rehabilitation, and OPD services. Specialized departments include orthopedics, ENT, pediatric surgery, and diagnostic services, supported by modern infrastructure such as a 1.5 Tesla MRI machine, a 32 slice CT scanner, two X ray units, phaco machinery for ophthalmic surgeries, and a laparoscopic tower for ENT procedures. NIRM's Artificial Limbs Center reported handling 3,611 cases and produces advanced bionic limbs, normally priced exorbitantly in private sectors, fully subsidized by Pakistan Bait ul Maal for non affording

patients. The facility operates in collaboration with NGOs to extend home based training for patients with restricted mobility, teaching them techniques to prevent bedsores and maintain muscular function. The financial overview revealed an annual budget allocation of Rs. 641.879 million, with 70 to 80% already utilized and plans to achieve 100% expenditure by year end. Despite this, committee members questioned fund lapses and the precise accounting of additional grants allocated for specialized machinery. All revenue from paying patients is directed to the Federal Treasury; NIRM retains no income. Concerns were also voiced over under registration of PWDs in Islamabad.

With an estimated 22,000 disabled individuals, only 4,000 currently hold NADRA-issued disability cards. The committee recommended mandatory registration for all patients at both public and private hospitals, emphasizing improved awareness campaigns to reach remote and underserved areas. Ministerial representatives highlighted the crucial role of Pakistan Bait ul Maal in ensuring access to free orthopedic surgeries, including total hip and knee replacements, often costing Rs. 200,000 to Rs. 250,000 per procedure in private hospitals. While NIRM's infrastructure and specialized services have been upgraded, including OPD gyms, physiotherapy units, speech therapy departments, and

advanced diagnostic facilities, oversight officials underscored the importance of systematic monitoring and comprehensive reporting on patient inflows, budget utilization, and service coverage, particularly in light of urban and rural disparities. The session concluded with a commitment from NIRM and the Ministry to submit detailed five year patient statistics and expenditure reports to ensure transparency and equitable service delivery. Stakeholders emphasized the need for broader awareness campaigns, greater collaboration with NGOs, and stricter mechanisms to track unregistered disabled individuals across Islamabad and adjacent regions.

## Speaker NA Sardar Ayaz Sadiq Leads Historic Reform, Saving Rs. 4.5 Billion Through Austerity Measures and Institutional Modernization

# National Assembly secretariat implements comprehensive reform agenda, achieves 27.3% budget savings for current financial year

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Under the visionary leadership of Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, the National Assembly Secretariat has successfully implemented a comprehensive right-sizing, fiscal discipline, and institutional modernization programme aimed at enhancing efficiency, promoting transparency, and ensuring prudent utilization

of public resources. As a result of these austerity reforms, the Secretariat is on track to achieve savings of approximately Rs. 4.5 billion, representing 27.3 percent of its total budgeted expenditure for the Financial Year for current. The total projected expenditure of the National Assembly Secretariat for FY 2025-26 was Rs. 16.3 billion, comprising Rs. 9.4 billion in employee-related expendi-

ture, including salaries, allowances, and expenditures related to the pay of Members of the National Assembly and Secretariat officials, and Rs. 6.9 billion in non-employee-related expenditure covering operational costs, utilities, maintenance, procurement, transport, and other administrative expenses. Through a series of targeted austerity and efficiency measures, the National Assembly

Secretariat has generated estimated savings of Rs. 2.0 billion in employee-related expenditure and Rs. 2.5 billion in non-employee-related expenditure. As part of the right-sizing initiative, the sanctioned strength of the National Assembly Secretariat is being reduced from 1,725 posts to 1,344 posts. Of the targeted reduction of 381 posts, 301 positions have already been abol-

ished, while the remaining 80 posts are scheduled to be abolished during FY 2026-27. These reforms reflect Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq's commitment to creating a more efficient, and performance-oriented institution capable of delivering high-quality services while reducing the burden on the national exchequer. However, it may be clarified that while doing so not a single employ-

ee was laid off or forced to resign. It reflects smart Human Resource Management. Significant savings in non-employee expenditure have resulted from strengthened financial oversight, cost-effective procurement practices, energy conservation measures, tighter controls on operational spending, and the adoption of modern administrative systems.

# Opinion & Editorial


  
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## Fighting Israel's war

**Zahid Hussain**  
IT'S the tail that is wagging the dog' aptly describes the ongoing conflict in the Middle East. The reality is that America is fighting Israel's war. The Zionist state not only acts as a spoiler but also effectively dictates the terms of war and peace in the region. A recent example of this is Israel's military escalation in Lebanon, which has not only complicated diplomatic efforts to resolve the US-Iran conflict, but has also broadened the theatre of war.

Despite President Donald Trump's claims of having halted the conflict, the war continues. Israeli forces have occupied a significant portion of Lebanon, and relentless bombings have devastated Beirut, effectively undermining the US-brokered ceasefire.

Incensed by Israel's blatant violation of the ceasefire, Iran has suspended its back-channel negotiations with the US and warned that it could "completely block" the Strait of Hormuz, aggravating tensions. Tehran asserts that any peace talks are directly linked to a ceasefire in Lebanon and Israel's withdrawal from the region. Additionally, Iran has threatened to strike Israel if the war in Lebanon is not halted. Hours later, Trump stated that he had urged Israel to cease its offensive; however, there are no signs of an end to the hostilities.

Last week, Israel captured the 900-year-old Beaufort Castle and its strategic ridge

in southern Lebanon. Israeli forces used the castle, also known as Qalaat al-Shaqif, as a base during their two-decade occupation of southern Lebanon that ended in 2000.

Israel's latest military escalation is not limited to Lebanon; it extends to Gaza.

It marks Israel's deepest incursion into the country in 26 years, and there appears to be no end to its aggression, which has received Washington's approval. The conflict with Iran has now effectively been extended to the Levant. Israel entered Lebanon under the pretext of combating Hezbollah, the pro-Iran group based in southern Lebanon. Last year, Israel killed nearly all of the group's senior leaders, including its head.

While Israel claimed to have completely dismantled Hezbollah's structure, recent retaliatory attacks by the group indicate that, despite these setbacks, it remains capable of fighting back. Additionally, Israel has incurred significant casualties from its invasion, with reports indicating that 26 soldiers have been killed thus far.

Hezbollah was formed in 1982 in response to the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, which aimed to dismantle the Palestinian Liberation Organisation. The group quickly emerged as a powerful resistance movement and a dominant force in Lebanese politics. Its resistance efforts ultimately led to Israel's

withdrawal from Lebanon, ending Tel Aviv's occupation of the southern region in 2000.

Although Hezbollah receives backing from Iran, it has maintained its political independence. The ongoing US-Israel conflict with Iran has involved Hezbollah militarily against Israel. A ceasefire in April temporarily halted hostilities, but Israel's recent aggression has effectively ended this truce. Despite suffering losses among its commanders in recent weeks, Hezbollah remains capable of fighting back without external assistance.

Israel has issued displacement orders and evacuation warnings for approximately 14 to 15 per cent of Lebanon's territory. Additionally, Israeli forces continue to occupy specific strategic locations in southern Lebanon. As a result of the ongoing conflict, more than one million people have been displaced within the country, including over 300,000 children, further aggravating the humanitarian crisis. Israel's latest military escalation is not limited to Lebanon; it extends to Gaza. Israel has not complied with the ceasefire agreement reached last year, nor has it withdrawn its forces to the designated area in the occupied territory. The Israeli military continues to conduct strikes and seize territory despite a ceasefire with Hamas.

Courtesy Dawn

## IMF - an instrument of dollar hegemony

Haron Rashid Siddiqi

The financial architecture of the modern world was not built upon any inevitable economic truth, but upon an astute geopolitical calculation. As the world struggled to emerge from the twin devastations of the Great Depression and the Second World War, delegates from forty-four nations gathered at Bretton Woods in 1944 to devise a framework that would prevent the recurrence of global financial disorder. What emerged, however, was not an impartial system of economic cooperation, but a settlement shaped decisively by American power and designed to institutionalise the economic predominance of the United States. Yet the path not taken - the International Clearing Union proposed by the British economist John Maynard Keynes - remains perhaps the greatest "what if" in the history of modern macroeconomics.

Keynes arrived at Bretton Woods with a proposal of remarkable foresight and uncommon fairness: the creation of a genuinely neutral international currency called the Bancor. Unlike national currencies, the Bancor would have existed solely as an international unit of account, detached from the political compulsions of any one state. More importantly, Keynes's model sought to address the fundamental flaw of international trade - the chronic imbalance between surplus and deficit nations.

At the heart of Keynes's proposal lay the principle of symmetry. He recognised that countries running persistent trade surpluses could be as destabilising to the global economy as countries trapped in perpetual deficits. Under his proposed International Clearing Union, surplus nations accumulating excessive Bancor credits would face penalties on hoarded reserves, thereby compelling them either to increase imports from struggling economies or to revalue their currencies.

Courtesy Tribune

## Leghari orders immediate disciplinary action against worst-performing field officers



PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Power, Sardar Awais Ahmed Khan Leghari, on Wednesday issued strict directions to all electricity Distribution Companies (DISCOs) across Pakistan to initiate immediate disciplinary proceedings against their worst-performing Sub-Divisional Officers (SDOs) and Executive Engineers (XENs).

Acting in the minister's directive, Peshawar Electric Supply Company (PESCO) and Sukkur

Electric Power Company (SEPCO) have become the first DISCOs to initiate immediate disciplinary action — including suspension — against their worst-performing officers on account of failure in resolution of consumer complaints registered through the national 118 Call Centre system (CCMS PLUS), said a statement.

All remaining Distribution Companies (DISCOs) across Pakistan are in the process of initiating similar action against their respective worst-performing officers.

The minister's directive followed his personal and comprehensive review of complaint handling performance data extracted from the Customer Complaint Management System (CCMS PLUS) — Pakistan's national 118 call centre — covering the period from October 1, 2025 to March 31, 2026. The data, encompassing complaints related to power outages, voltage fluctuations, line faults, and transformer tripping, revealed a deeply alarming pattern of neglect. Tens of thousands of consumer complaints registered during the review period were either resolved late or left unattended within the stipulated resolution windows, directly resulting in prolonged electricity disruptions for citizens across urban and rural areas alike. The Power Division identified the worst-performing officers in each DISCO on the basis of complaints resolved late under their respective jurisdictions and formally communicated these lists.

## Pakistan, WB discuss human capital development, technology-led service delivery

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb and World Bank (WB) delegation, led by Vice President for Human Development, Ms. Mamta Murthi here on Wednesday discussed strengthening cooperation in human capital development, focusing on skills enhancement, improved health outcomes, education, social protection and technology-driven public service delivery.

The delegation included Ms. Bolormaa Amgabazar, Country Director for Pakistan; Ms. Keiko Inoue, Regional Director for Human Development; Ms. Sherin Varkey, Health Practice Manager; and Mr. Simon Andrews, IFC Director, according to press release issued by finance ministry.

On the occasion, Aurangzeb appreciated the World Bank Group's continued partnership with Pakistan and acknowledged its support for the country's development and reform priorities.

He noted that while Pakistan had made important progress in restoring macroeconomic stability, the government's focus has been increasingly directed towards improving social and human development outcomes through targeted investments in health, education, skills development, and social protection. He emphasized the importance of maintaining a strong focus on measurable outcomes and effective implementation under the World Bank's long-term Country Partnership Framework with Pakistan.

The minister highlighted that Pakistan's large and youthful population presents both a significant opportunity and an important policy priority.

He underscored the need to improve human capital indicators, strengthen workforce participation, and equip young people with skills aligned with evolving labour market requirements. He further emphasized that sustained economic growth and competitiveness would require continued investments.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, holding a meeting with a World Bank Group delegation led by Ms. Mamta Murthi, Vice President for Human Development (Health, Education and Social Protection), to discuss human capital development, skills, health outcomes, and technology-led service delivery at the Finance Division.

## Abbasi calls for stronger Pakistan, Italy economic, trade cooperation

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Railways Muhammad Hanif Abbasi Wednesday underscored the need to further strengthen bilateral engagement in trade, investment and economic cooperation between Pakistan and Italy, emphasizing that enhanced collaboration can unlock new opportunities for both countries.

Speaking at a ceremony marking the 80th Republic Day of Italy, the minister extended warm congratulations to the Italian government and people on their national day and reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to deepening its partnership



with Italy.

Abbasi calls for stronger Pakistan, Italy economic, trade cooperation

Hanif Abbasi said that Pakistan and Italy enjoy

longstanding and cordial relations founded on mutual respect, trust and cooperation.

He said Italy's support and collaboration across var-

ious sectors have significantly contributed to strengthening bilateral ties over the years.

The minister reiterated Pakistan's desire to further

expand its relationship with Italy through greater economic engagement, increased investment, and sustained diplomatic cooperation.

## Pakistan, Turkmenistan discuss enhancing bilateral relations



PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Dr. Tariq Fazal Chaudhry on Wednesday held a meeting with Turkmenistan's Ambassador to Pakistan, Atadjan Movlamov, and discussed matters of mutual interest as well as ways to further strengthen bilateral relations.

The two sides exchanged views on regional stability and explored opportunities to enhance cooperation between Pakistan and Turkmenistan in various sectors. Dr. Tariq Fazal reaffirmed

Pakistan's commitment to expanding collaboration in parliamentary exchanges, trade, energy and regional connectivity initiatives. The ambassador appreciated Pakistan's role in promoting peace and stability in the region and expressed Turkmenistan's interest in expanding economic and cultural ties with Pakistan.

Both sides agreed to enhance high-level contacts and strengthen parliamentary diplomacy to build a long-term partnership aimed at promoting shared prosperity and regional cooperation.

## Ombudsman orders overhaul of Islamabad airport services

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: A team of the Wafaqi Mohtasib (Ombudsman) on Wednesday directed authorities at Islamabad International Airport to improve passenger services, address recurring complaints of maladministration and negligence, and establish dedicated counters for senior citizens following an inspection prompted by a growing number of public grievances regarding immigration delays, mishandling of luggage and poor treatment of travellers. The inspection was carried out under the directives of Wafaqi Mohtasib Naveed Kamran Baloch amid increasing complaints from passengers, particularly overseas Pakistanis, about service deficiencies at the country's airports. The Ombudsman's



team stressed that all passengers, especially members of the Pakistani diaspora who contribute significantly to the national economy through remittances, deserve respectful and efficient treatment. Taking serious notice of complaints related to delayed baggage delivery, loss of luggage and prolonged immigration procedures, the team called for comprehensive corrective measures to prevent such issues from recurring. It also urged airport authorities to enhance the effectiveness.

## Governor KP, Hanif Abbasi discuss reforms, national issues

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faisal Karim Kundi Wednesday met with Federal Minister for Railways Muhammad Hanif Abbasi and discussed matters of mutual interest, including railway reforms, national development and public welfare initiatives. During the meeting, Kundi appreciated the ongoing reform measures and improvement initiatives being undertaken in Pakistan Railways, describing them as important steps towards enhancing public convenience and service delivery. He said that reforms in the railway sector were helping improve travel facilities and restoring public confidence in the national transport system.



Governor Kundi expressed hope that continued modernization and administrative improvements would further strengthen the performance of Pakistan Railways. The two leaders also exchanged views on the country's overall political and economic situation, as well as measures aimed at addressing public issues and improving governance. They reaffirmed their commitment to national development.

He highlighted the importance of fostering business partnerships, promoting cultural exchanges, and enhancing people-to-people contacts to strengthen mutual understanding and broaden avenues of cooperation.

Expressing confidence in the future of Pakistan and Italy relations, Abbasi said the friendship between the two countries would continue to grow and flourish in the years ahead. He said the Republic Day celebration as a valuable opportunity to reinforce diplomatic engagement and advance bilateral relations. The minister also commended the services of Marlene Armellini.