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**IRS-BNU hold second
high-level dialogue on
Building Peace in SA**



**No sugar crisis,
sufficient stock available:
Rana Tanveer**

Founded By:
(Late) Rehmat Khan

ABC CERTIFIED

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

Executive Group Editor
Arif Mehmood Khan



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Govt acting on comprehensive and effective strategy to completely eliminate terrorist outfits: PM Shehbaz

ARIF MEHMOOD KHAN

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday said the government was implementing a comprehensive and effective strategy to "completely eliminate" the menace posed by the proscribed Fitna-al-Hindustan, Fitna-al-Khawarij and other terrorist outfits to the country.

Pakistan has seen a surge in terrorism since the banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) ended its ceasefire deal with the government in November 2022, vowing to increase attacks.

In response, the government labelled the group as Fitna-al-Khawarij and directed use of the term khariji for attackers. It later designated Balochistan-based groups as Fitna-

al-Hindustan to highlight India's alleged role in terrorism and destabilisation across Pakistan.

A statement issued by the Prime Minister's Office said the premier chaired a meeting of the Steering Committee on Counter-Terrorism and Establishment of the State Writ (Harden the State) today at the PM House. The meeting was attended by Deputy PM and Foreign Minister Muhammad Ishaq Dar, Chief of Army Staff (COAS) Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, National Security Adviser Lieutenant General Muhammad Asim Malik, PM aide Rana Sanallah, the four provincial chief secretaries and police chief, ministers and officials.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting of the steering committee on Anti-Terrorism and Harden the State.

Saudi ambassador meets Nawaz Sharif, CM Maryam to discuss bilateral ties

SEHRISH NAZ



LAHORE: Saudi Ambassador Nawaf bin Saeed Al-Malki on Thursday called on PML-N President Nawaz Sharif and Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz.

The three-time prime minister conveyed his heartfelt respect and best wishes for the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin

Abdulaziz, and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

The meeting focused on a range of topics including mutual cooperation, economic collaboration, defence partnership, and the unity of the Muslim Ummah.

Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to further strengthen the historic, political, economic, and defence ties between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia.

They agreed to expand defence cooperation, joint training programs, intelligence sharing, and mutual assistance.

Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz stated that the land of Saudi Arabia holds a deep spiritual and emotional significance for every Muslim.

She said that the Pakistan-Saudi ties are based on mutual trust, shared values, and longstanding brotherhood. She added that Saudi Arabia remains a central pillar of Pakistan's foreign policy, with bilateral ties growing stronger across political, economic, and other sectors. She also praised Saudi Arabia's constructive role in promoting regional peace.

Remote sensing satellite launch reaffirms Pakistan's position among space-faring nations: FO

SIDRA SADOZAI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Thursday said that the successful launch of its Remote Sensing Satellite has reaffirmed its position among the community of space-faring nations, leveraging innovation to pursue a more secure, sustainable, and prosperous future.

In a major milestone for space exploration and technological progress, Pakistan successfully launched its Remote Sensing Satellite from the Xichang Satellite Launch Centre (XSLC) in China.

"The satellite will provide high-resolution, round-the-clock imaging, significantly strengthening Pakistan's capabilities in urban planning, infrastructure development, disaster management and mitigation, agricultural monitoring, food security, environmental protection, deforestation tracking, climate change analysis, and water resource management," Foreign Office spokesperson Shaqfat Ali Khan said in a statement.

Launched by Pakistan's national space agency, SUPARCO, in collaboration with the China



Electronics Technology Group Corporation (CETC) and MICROSAT China, the satellite represents a cornerstone of an integrated Earth observation system. It is set to support sustainable socio-economic development and improve the quality of life across the country.

Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar commended the dedication of the engineers, scientists, and technical teams from SUPARCO Pakistan and CETC & MICROSAT China for their exemplary cooperation and unwavering commitment to the mission.

President Zardari for stronger Pakistan-Ghana ties for mutual benefits

SAMRA ATHAR
ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari on Thursday said that Pakistan and Ghana enjoyed cordial relations, which needed to be further strengthened for the mutual benefit of both countries. The president, in a meeting with Pakistan's Ambassador-designate to Ghana Najeer Durrani, who called on him at Bilawal House here, called for a focus on promoting economic and trade relations between the two nations.

Omar Ayub, Shibli Faraz among other PTI leaders handed 10-year jail term in May 9 cases

PEAK POINT

FAISALABAD: A special anti-terrorism court (ATC) in Faisalabad on Thursday sentenced several Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leaders — including Omar Ayub, Shibli Faraz, and Zartaj Gul — to 10 years in prison over their involvement in cases related to the May 9, 2023, violence. Strict security arrangements were made both inside and outside the court to avoid any untoward incidents. In the case related to the attack on a sensitive institution, the court awarded punishments of 108 out of 185 accused, while the rest were acquitted. The court sentenced Omar Ayub, Shibli Faraz, and Zartaj Gul to 10 years in prison. Member of the National Assembly Sahibzada Hamid Raza was also sentenced to 10 years in



jail. Junaid Afzal Sahi received a 3-year prison sentence, which is the shortest sentence given by the court. The Faisalabad ATC acquitted Fawad Chaudhry, and Zain Qureshi, the son of Shah Mahmood Qureshi and 75 others in the cases. In a separate case registered at Ghulam Muhammadabad Police Station, the court sentenced 60 individuals, while

7 of the 67 accused were acquitted. Separately, another court in Faisalabad also delivered a verdict in the case related to setting a police van on fire, sentencing 28 out of 32 accused to 10 years in prison, while acquitting 4 individuals.

The Supreme Court had directed anti-terrorism courts to conclude proceedings and deliver verdicts in the May 9

cases, with the deadline set by the apex court expiring next month. To recall, violent protests erupted across the country on May 9 following the arrest of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan. During these protests, several government and military buildings were attacked. Anti-terrorism cases were registered in various cities, and in Faisalabad, the cases were filed by the police. Earlier this month, the Lahore ATC sentenced eight leaders of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) — including Mian Mehmood-ur-Rasheed, Dr Yasmin Rashid, Ijaz Chaudhry, and Omar Sarfraz Cheema — to 10 years in prison each for their involvement in the Sherpao Bridge arson and incitement case, related to the May 9 protests.

India PM Modi faces opposition fury after Trump's 25pc tariff threat

PEAK POINT

WASHINGTON: Indian opposition parties criticised the government on Thursday, describing US President Donald Trump's threat of a 25 per cent tariff as a diplomatic failure for New Delhi, while the rupee currency tumbled and equity indexes slid in response to the news. The 25pc rate would single out India more harshly than other major trading partners, and threatens to unravel months of talks, undermining one of Washington's strategic partners in the region, viewed as a counterbalance to China. Trump said the tariff on imports from India would start from Friday, in addition to an unspecified penalty for Russian dealings and involvement in the BRICS grouping of nations. In response, the government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi said it was studying the implications of Trump's remarks and was dedicated to securing a fair trade deal.





Sharjah likely to host tri-series featuring Pakistan, UAE and Afghanistan

MUHAMMAD USMAN

ISLAMABAD: A tri-nation cricket series featuring Pakistan, Afghanistan, and the United Arab Emirates is expected to begin in the final week of August, according to sources.

The three-team contest is likely to kick off on August 29, with all fixtures scheduled to take place in Sharjah, UAE.

The opening clash is expected to see Pakistan face Afghanistan on 29th August, followed by a possible match between UAE and Pakistan on 30 August. The final of the seven-match series is likely to be held on 7 September, as per insider information.

Full schedule finalised
Sources confirmed that the complete schedule for the tri-series has been finalised. In total, seven matches are expected to be played across the tournament, all hosted at the historic Sharjah venue.

When will Pakistan and India face off in Asia Cup 2025?

This series will serve as an important preparatory event for the participating teams, especially Pakistan, as they look ahead to upcoming international commitments.

Squad announcement soon

The national squad is expected to remain in the UAE following the tri-series, as Pakistan is set to participate in the Asia Cup immediately after. Interestingly, the selection committee is expected to announce the squad for both the tri-nation series and the Asia Cup simultaneously. The continuity of matches in Sharjah will allow the team to stay acclimatised to the conditions ahead of the regional tournament.

Pakistan ease past Czech Republic in World Jr Squash Team C'ships



SAMRA ATHAR

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan registered a convincing 2-0 victory over the Czech Republic in the 5th-8th position placement match at the World Junior Squash Team Championships in Egyptian capital Cairo on Thursday. According to information made available here by Pakistan Squash Federation, Pakistani players exhibited great skills and temperament to pull off the win. Abdullah Nawaz battled through a five-game thriller to defeat Martin Stepan 11-8, 7-11, 9-11, 11-7, 11-7, giving Pakistan an early lead. Muhammad Umair Arif followed up with a dominant performance, cruising past David Linhart 11-3, 11-4, 11-1 to seal the tie for Pakistan. With this win, Pakistan advanced to the 5th-place playoff, where they will face Korea in their final match of the event.

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's Street Child Football Team continued their impressive run at the ongoing international football event in Norway, securing a commanding 3-0 victory over Sweden's Skyllbergs IK club.

Cricket returns to Olympics, but Pakistan, NZ unhappy with qualification format

ARIF MEHMOOD KHAN

LOS ANGELES: The International Cricket Council (ICC) has finalised the qualification format for men's cricket at the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics, sparking discontent from Pakistan and New Zealand over the proposed system.

According to British media, the ICC will implement a regional qualifying format under which the top-ranked team from Asia, Oceania, Africa, and Europe will qualify directly for the Olympics.

USA will automatically qualify as the host nation, while the method for the sixth team's qualification is yet to be finalised.

Under this system, India, currently ranked No. 1, would qualify from Asia, leaving Pakistan (ranked 8th) at risk of missing a direct berth.

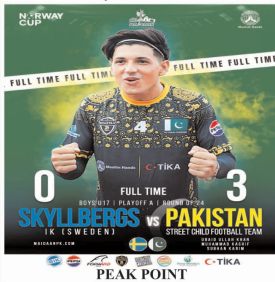
Similarly, Australia (ranked No. 2) would qualify from Oceania, while New Zealand (ranked 4th) could miss out despite being among the top five squad.



The USA, ranked 17th, secures a spot as host, while the qualification process for women's cricket will be based on the results of the 2026 T20 World Cup, while the International Olympic Committee (IOC) has endorsed ICC's regional format.

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Pakistan street child football team shine in Norway tournament



ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's Street Child Football Team continued their impressive run at the ongoing international football event in Norway, securing a commanding 3-0 victory over Sweden's Skyllbergs IK club.

Ubaid opened the scoring for Pakistan, followed by a second goal from Kashif Shinwari. Subhan Karim sealed the win with the third and final goal, ensuring the team's dominance throughout the match. All three players showcased exceptional talent and played a pivotal role in the team's success.

Pakistan is now set to face Gambia in the pre-quarterfinals later tonight.

Daniyal Ijaz wins 17th Islamabad Open Bowling Championship

JAVED KHAN

ISLAMABAD: Daniyal Ijaz clinched the title of the 17th Islamabad Open Bowling Championship, outplaying his competitors with an impressive score of 268 points.

Faheem Khan secured second place with 187 points in the event held in the federal capital.

The championship, organized by the Islamabad Tenpin Bowling Association (ITBA) in collaboration with the Pakistan Tenpin Bowling Federation (PTBF), attracted participation from top bowlers across Islamabad.

President of the PTBF, Ijaz-ur-Rehman, distributed trophies among the winners during the prize-giving ceremony. Also present at the occasion were former PTBF Secretary General Muhammad Hussain Chattha and ITBA President Rana Afzal Akhtar.

In their congratulatory remarks, Ijaz-ur-Rehman, Chattha and Akhtar lauded Daniyal Ijaz for his dominant performance and extended best wishes to Faheem Khan for securing the runner-up position.



Pakistan exit U-19 volleyball after five-set thriller against Poland

SIDRA SADOZAI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's valiant campaign at the World Under-19 Volleyball Championship ended in heartbreak on Wednesday, as they succumbed to a narrow 2-3 defeat against volleyball powerhouse Poland in a fiercely contested pre-quarterfinal match.

The clash, held at Yunnusobod Hall and the Sport University Center in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, saw Pakistan exit the title race despite a performance brimming with fight.

Having topped Group 'A' and entered the last 16 as a threatening force, Pakistan pushed one of the world's leading teams to the absolute limit but ultimately fell short. The match unfolded dramatically across five intense sets.

Poland seized the opening set 25-21, only for Pakistan to level the contest by clinching the second set 25-23.

Regaining momentum, Pakistan delivered a commanding performance to take the third set 25-17. Undeterred, Poland fought back to win the fourth set 25-21, forcing a decisive fifth set.

The final set provided a nail-biting climax, with both teams battling point-for-point. Ultimately, Poland edged it 18-16, bringing the thrilling encounter to a dramatic close.

Pakistan captain Mohammad Yahya, 17, led his team's scoring effort with an impressive 21



points, also registering the second-highest efficiency rating for the national side. Outside hitter Amjad Junaid contributed significantly with 15 points.

Mohammad Saud and Jabran added two points apiece from blocks.

For Poland, Maksymilian Lyson proved instrumental, top-scoring with 26 points throughout the match. Despite the disappointing result, the young Pakistani squad earned widespread admiration from global volleyball fans for their exceptional fighting spirit, technical skill and composure under intense pressure.

Their tournament run was historic, marking the first time Pakistan achieved four consecutive victories in the group stage of this championship, a winning streak only halted by Argentina in their final pool match.

Pakistan will now compete in the positional matches to determine their final ranking.

Separately, Pakistan Volleyball Federation (PVF) chairman Chaudhry Mohammad Yaqoob hailed the national team's high-level performance in a press statement.

However, he also raised objections over controversial umpiring during the match and announced the federation's decision to formally protest by writing a letter to the international governing body.



IRS-BNU hold second high-level dialogue on Building Peace in South Asia

SIDRA SADOZAI
ISLAMABAD: The Institute of Regional Studies, (IRS) and Beaconhouse National University, (BNU) convened intellectuals and experts for a roundtable discussion on the challenges and opportunities for peace in South Asia following the military clash between Pakistan and India.

Mr. Attaullah Tarar, Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting, was the Chief Guest, and Gen. Zubair Mahmood Hayat, NI (M), Former CJCS, was the Guest of Honor.

The policy dialogue was

timely as Pakistan seeks a regional and global strategy to restore peace and stability disrupted by India's risky military doctrine, which escalated regional tensions to the brink of nuclear conflict.

Speaking on the occasion, Mr. Attaullah Tarar said that peace must be rooted in reciprocity. Pakistan has always played an active role in strengthening peace in South Asia and will continue to play a similar role in the future. However, he cautioned that Pakistan will respond to any aggression against India as it did during Operation Bunyanum-Marsoos. He added that

Pakistan was fully capable to render a befitting response against any act of aggression. On Kashmir issue, he was of the opinion that the right of Kashmiris to self-determination is now a global agenda and Pakistan will continue to support this struggle steadfastly. Its resolution demands urgency, now more than ever.



especially in the wake of recent war between India and Pakistan which triggered the nuclear flashpoint in this region, mainly due to India's irresponsible behavior. Ambassador Jauhar Saleem, President IRS, Dr. Moeed Yusuf, VC BNU and former NSA and Director of Beaconhouse Center for

Policy Research Ambassador Mansoor Ahmed Khan initiated the discussion with an analysis of South Asia's security landscape following the Pahalgam incident. The participants of the dialogue included Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed, Mr. Khurram Dastgir Khan, Former Minister of Defence and Foreign Affairs, Lt. Gen(r) Nasser Khan Janjua, Former National Security Advisor, Lt. Gen. (r) Aamer Riaz,

Gen. (r) HI (M), Former President NDU, Admiral (r) Asif Sandila NI (M), former Naval Chief, Air Marshal (r) Saeed Muhammad Khan, former

VCAS, Ambassador Ashraf Jehangir Qazi, Former Ambassador to US, India and China, Ambassador Ali Sarwar Naqvi, Executive Director, Center for International Strategic Studies (CISS), Ambassador Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry, Former Foreign Secretary, Lt. Gen. (r) Naem Khalid Lodhi, Defence Analyst, Mr. Azfar Ahsan, Former Minister for Investment and Chairman of the Board of Investment, Ambassador Shafqat Kakakhel, Chairperson, BoG SDPI, and former UN Assistant Secretary General, Mr. Zahid Hussain, Senior Journalist, Author, Dr. Maria Sultan.

PTA Fines Rs. 69 Million to Telcos, Blocks 13,000 Fraudulent URLs in Dual Fight for Service Quality and Cybersecurity

NADEEM TANOLI
ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) has levied fines totaling nearly Rs. 69 million on cellular operators over five years for failing to meet service quality standards, while simultaneously leading a sweeping digital crackdown against online fraud by blocking more than 13,000 malicious URLs. These revelations are part of a detailed regulatory brief submitted to the Senate Standing Committee on IT & Telecommunication ahead of a critical review

meeting. The PTA's report paints a picture of a telecom regulator under immense pressure—tasked with maintaining the reliability of Pakistan's digital infrastructure while defending against a rising tide of cybercrime. The timing is significant, as Pakistan's IT exports have surged to a record-breaking \$3.8 billion, drawing heightened attention to the strength and safety of the country's digital backbone. On the telecom front, the PTA's Quality of Service (QoS) survey and enforcement data reveal a persistent gap between perfor-

mance benchmarks and actual consumer experience. In the past five years, the PTA has issued 39 show cause notices to telecom operators for service failures, imposing Rs. 68.9 million in penalties. Of that, Rs. 13.6 million has been recovered, while Rs. 32.05 million has been committed to escrow accounts for future settlement. The report highlights several operational hurdles hampering service quality. Extended power outages—many lasting beyond 18 hours—are straining backup systems at cellular towers, with around 17% of sites

impacted by limited access to commercial electricity. Infrastructure deployment continues to face obstacles such as delayed Right of Way (ROW) approvals and ongoing theft and vandalism at telecom sites. One of the most pressing concerns for the PTA is Pakistan's readiness for 5G. The report notes that the country's fiber-to-site ratio remains "relatively low," meaning that the current network lacks sufficient high-speed connectivity between towers. Without rapid upgrades to this backhaul infrastructure, the path to 5G

remains obstructed. In parallel with telecom oversight, the PTA is aggressively working to sanitize the digital landscape in coordination with agencies like the National Cyber Crime Investigation Agency (NCCIA), the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), and the Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP). The PTA has processed 13,185 reported URLs linked to electronic fraud, successfully blocking 13,021—achieving a 98.76% success rate. The vast majority of fraudulent URLs were traced back to Facebook,

where 1,246 out of 1,357 reported links were disabled. Other platforms were also involved, but Facebook stood out as the primary battleground for digital scams targeting Pakistani users. To bolster its enforcement, the PTA has launched widespread public education campaigns. These include 22 SMS alerts broadcast to all mobile subscribers, the publication of digital safety guidebooks in partnership with UNICEF and TikTok, and a collaborative video series with Meta called "Chai Chat" focused on spotting scams.

Opinion & Editorial

The Rise of China-Central Asia Trade: Is Pakistan Missing Out?



Sidra sadozai
Resident Editor
Daily Peak Point

Overview

Central Asia is quickly becoming a key hub in Beijing's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) as China expands its political and economic influence there. Energy agreements, infrastructure investments, and regional connectivity initiatives have all contributed to the recent spike in trade volumes between China and the Central Asian republics. One obvious question, though, arises in the midst of this change: is Pakistan falling behind?

Pakistan has yet to fully take advantage of the opportunities that trade between China and Central Asia offers, despite its advantageous location and involvement in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Pakistan has both opportunities and risks in reclaiming its relevance in this evolving environment as regional transportation corri-

dors change and develop. Trade Between China and Central Asia: A Quick Rise Over the past 20 years, trade has increased dramatically between China and the five Central Asian countries of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan. China's Ministry of Commerce reports that trade with Central Asia increased from less than \$10 billion in 2000 to over \$70 billion in 2023.

A large portion of this trade is made possible by the extensive BRI-connected infrastructure, such as the roads, pipelines, and railroads that link the resource-rich economies of Central Asia with western China (Xinjiang). More than 60% of China's land-based trade with the region is handled by Kazakhstan alone, and Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan are becoming important partners in logistics and energy. This expanding trade is supported by: China's insatiable desire for natural resources, including rare earths, uranium, oil, and gas,

The landlocked region of Central Asia requires export routes. Chinese investments in special economic zones (SEZs) and logistics hubs are strategic. The CPEC Dilemma: Pakistan's Untapped Potential Launched in 2015, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor was intended to be the centerpiece of the Belt and Road Initiative. Through Gwadar Port, it was intended to turn Pakistan into a regional hub that would link China with the Arabian Sea. But almost ten years later, the dream has faded because of Pakistan's lack of economic reforms, political unrest, security risks, and bureaucratic hold-ups.

A large portion of CPEC's potential is still untapped despite more than \$25 billion in Chinese investments: Due to inadequate connectivity with Central Asia, Gwadar Port is underutilized. Funding shortages and poor management cause delays in rail and road projects. Chinese engagement is hindered by political unpredictability

and security concerns in Balochistan. Originally interested in using Pakistan as a transit corridor, Central Asian states are increasingly choosing routes through Russia, Iran, Azerbaijan, or Turkey because they are thought to be more secure, stable, and integrated into international markets. China's Transition to West-Central Corridors In an effort to lessen its reliance on any one corridor, China is actively expanding its options for connectivity. It has started a number of transportation routes between West and Central Asia, including: The railway connecting Turkey, Europe, Kazakhstan, and Iran, Through Central Asia, the Caspian Sea, and the South Caucasus, the Middle Corridor (Trans-Caspian International Transport Route) links China with Europe. In 2023, the long-delayed China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan (CKU) railway project gained new impetus. These corridors offer Pakistan the

potential to connect to safe, multimodal supply chains while avoiding the unstable Afghan-Pakistan region. Pakistan, on the other hand, has not yet demonstrated the efficiency or stability that would make it a desirable link in this chain. Is the Afghan Factor a Lost Strategic Chance? A stable Afghanistan might be an essential land bridge connecting Pakistan and Central Asia. Islamabad had long hoped that trade flows from Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan to Gwadar via Pakistani highways would be facilitated once peace was restored in Afghanistan.

However, these goals were complicated in 2021 by the Taliban's comeback to power. Long-term infrastructure and transit projects have been deterred by the persistent security concerns, the absence of official recognition of the Taliban government, and international sanctions, despite Islamabad's close ties to Kabul. Furthermore, the void has been swiftly exploited by regional actors such as Iran. While Pakistan faces

internal problems, Tehran has attracted interest from Central Asia by offering Chabahar Port as a more stable, U.S. sanctions-exempt route for trade and humanitarian purposes. What Pakistan Is Not Getting A number of inter-related issues prevent Pakistan from assimilating into the emerging China-Central Asia trade regime: Inconsistent Economic Policy: Investor confidence has been harmed by frequent changes in government and a lack of long-term planning. Inadequate Infrastructure: Although CPEC has resulted in the construction of roads and power plants, rail connectivity and logistics networks are still lacking. Security Concerns: Gwadar's appeal has diminished due to the ongoing insurgency in Balochistan and threats to Chinese personnel. Limited Regional Engagement: Pakistan has not successfully negotiated trade agreements or engaged Central Asian nations through proactive diplomacy.

Customs and Bureaucracy: Trade through Pakistan is expensive and slow due to convoluted border procedures, corruption, and ineffective customs clearance systems. Is Pakistan Able to Overtake? Even though Pakistan is falling behind, there is still time to catch up. Its significance in trade between China and Central Asia can be restored by taking the following actions: Renovate Gwadar Port: Make sure local support is obtained, expedite port infrastructure development, and deal with Baloch security concerns. Invest in road and rail connections from Torkham and Chaman into Central Asia via Afghanistan in order to fortify the Afghan Corridor and engage with the Taliban in a reasonable manner. Modernize Customs: To cut down on trade delays, digitize and expedite border processes at Torkham, Chaman, and Sust. Diplomatic Push: Through bilateral agreements, connectivity conferences, and trade forums, raise the level of high-level engagement

with Central Asian republics. Multilateral Integration: Contribute practical projects to regional initiatives such as the Trans-Caspian Corridor, the International North-South Transport Corridor, and the Economic Cooperation Organization. In conclusion Pakistan is at a turning point as China redraws the Eurasian trade route through Central Asia. Although it is limited by its own policy failures, instability, and strategic indecision, it has the geographic advantage, the Chinese partnership, and historical connectivity to play a significant role. Others, especially Iran, Turkey, and the South Caucasus states, will step in if Pakistan does not. The expansion of trade between China and Central Asia is a global realignment rather than merely a regional one. Pakistan faces a difficult decision: either reform and participate in the new Eurasia trade order, or stay out of the spotlight.

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Pakistan, US successfully conclude landmark trade deal



SIDRA SADOZAI
 ISLAMABAD: In a landmark development, Pakistan and the United States have finalized a trade agreement aimed at boosting bilateral trade, expanding market access, attracting investment, and fostering cooperation in areas of mutual interest. The breakthrough was reached during a meeting of Federal Minister for Finance Minister, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, with U.S. Secretary of Commerce, Howard Lutnick and United States Trade

Representative Ambassador Jamieson Greer in Washington, D.C. Secretary Commerce Jawad Paul and Pak Ambassador to the United States Ambassador Rizwan Saeed Sheikh were also present during the meeting, said a press release issued by finance ministry here adding President Trump announced the trade deal via a post on Truth Social. The agreement will result in reduction of reciprocal tariff especially on Pakistani exports to the United States, it added. This deal marks the

beginning of a new era of economic collaboration especially in energy, mines and mineral, IT, cryptocurrency and other sectors.

The deal complements Pakistan's existing efforts of broadening the scope of Pak-US economic ties and to include partnerships at the U.S. states level. The agreement enhances Pakistan's access to the U.S. market and vice versa. Additionally, the deal is expected to spur increased U.S. investment in Pakistan's infrastructure and development projects. This trade agreement underscores the commitment of both nations to deepen their bilateral relationship and explore all avenues for strengthening trade and investment ties. "Trade and investment have to go hand in hand, and today we see the emergence of a broader economic, bilateral, and strategic partnership," said Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb while commenting on the successful conclusion of a comprehensive trade agreement between Pakistan and the United States.

US-Pakistan trade deal a diplomatic milestone with economic advantages for public, Bilal Kiyani says

ARSHAD MALIK



ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Finance Bilal Azhar Kiyani Thursday praised the strengthening of the bilateral partnership between Pakistan and the United States, describing it as a historic trade deal that will not only boost exports but also mark a diplomatic triumph for the Pakistani government. In an exclusive interview with a local news channel, the state minister acknowledged that the deal was a result of years of hard work and dedication from both Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Deputy Prime Minister and the Finance Ministry.

He emphasized that this achievement was no easy task, crediting the leadership and collaboration of key officials for overcoming numerous challenges. Highlighting the extensive efforts, the Minister pointed out that US investment interests had been nurtured through months of discussions, particularly through the tireless efforts of Muhammad Urangzeb, who engaged US officials in crucial meetings. Bilal Azhar Kiyani further noted that the finalization of this agreement represented a monumental diplomatic victory, which will lead to long-term economic growth. He also commended Prime Minister's diplomatic initiatives, which he believes will have a lasting impact on Pakistan's economic stability and growth. The minister expressed optimism that the strengthened ties between the two nations would create positive.

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No sugar crisis, sufficient stock available: Rana Tanveer

AYESHA REHAN

ISLAMABAD: Categorically dismissing reports of a sugar shortage due to exports as a misleading perception, Federal Minister for National Food Security & Research, Rana Tanveer Hussain asserted on Thursday that Pakistan continued to hold a surplus of the commodity and the government has implemented a system to ensure sugar remains available at officially fixed prices.

"A perception is being created as if there is a major issue regarding the availability, supply, or pricing of sugar," the minister said while addressing a press conference. He added that the government has launched a crackdown on hoarders and profiteers, including retailers and even mill owners were being checked, to control manipulation in the market. Referring to criticism over the government's initial approval of sugar exports followed by import plans, Rana Tanveer said these narratives ignored historical trends and factual data. Citing records from the past ten years, he explained that sugar exports have traditionally been allowed soon after the

crushing season and were occasionally followed by imports—except in one or two years.

The minister explained that the Sugar Advisory Board—which includes federal ministers, secretaries, representatives from all four provinces, and industry stakeholders—approved exports last year on basis of data.

At the beginning of the season, Pakistan had an opening stock of 800,000 metric tons. The crushing season yielded 6.8 million metric tons of sugar, while the country's annual domestic consumption stood at 6.3 million metric tons—leaving a surplus of 1.3 million metric tons.

"To prevent a supply glut that could harm both farmers and millers, the government had allowed gradual sugar exports," he said.

Contrary to concerns that exports would lead to domestic shortages or price hikes, the market experienced a decline in prices—from Rs138 per kg to Rs119 per kg—after the export decision in October 2024. "This proves that the export decision was not responsible for any artificial shortage or price inflation," the minister added.

National AI policy milestone in Pakistan's digital transformation: Shaza Fatima

JAVED KHAN

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication, Shaza Fatima Khawaja, said on Thursday that Pakistan's first National Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy would pave the way for the country's entry into a new digital era. The Federal Cabinet has unanimously approved the National AI Policy 2025, which aims to establish a comprehensive AI ecosystem in Pakistan. The policy aimed to democratize access to artificial intelligence, enhance public services, and open up new employment and innovation avenues. The AI policy outlines training 1 million AI professionals by 2030, establishing an AI Innovation Fund and AI Venture Fund to boost private sector involvement, creation of 50,000 AI-driven civic projects and 1,000 local AI products in the next five years, distribution of 3,000 annual AI scholarships and facilitation of 1,000 research projects, inclusion of women and differently-abled individuals through accessible education and financing.

Chinese investors meet, Chairman PM's Youth Programme

HUMA REHAN



ISLAMABAD: The Chinese business and investment delegation has met with the Chairman Prime Minister's Youth Programme to explore investment opportunities in Pakistan. A high-level five-member Chinese business delegation from the All-China Federation of Industry and Commerce (ACFIC) and Precise Development (HK) Limited, China, is currently on a visit to Pakistan to explore industrial relocation opportunities and enhance bilateral economic cooperation, said a release issued here on Thursday. During their visit, they met with Rana Mashhood Ahmad Khan, Chairman of the Prime Minister's Youth Programme and Vice

President of the Pakistan Muslim League (N) in Punjab, who warmly received the delegation. The Chinese delegation was headed by Mr. Yi Jiang, Director of All-China Federation of Industry and Commerce (ACFIC), and Mr. David Chu, CEO of Precise Development (HK) Limited, China. The Chinese representatives expressed appreciation for Pakistan's commitment to fostering a welcoming environment for foreign investment.

RPO Bannu Sajjad Khan visits DHQ hospital inquires about injured police personnel

UMER DIAZ KHAN



BANNU: RPO Bannu Sajjad Khan Visits DHQ Hospital Inquires About Injured Police Personnel and Reviews Medical Facilities. Regional Police Officer Bannu, Sajjad Khan, visited the District Headquarters (DHQ) Hospital to inquire about the police personnel injured in the drone attack carried out by the Khawarij on the Miryan Police Station. Senior police officers also accompanied him during the visit. RPO Bannu inquired about the well-being of the injured personnel, appreciated their courage, and met with the hospital administration to review the medical treatment, availability of

medicines, and other healthcare facilities in detail. On this occasion, RPO Sajjad Khan stated that the brave personnel of the police force are our top priority, and their sacrifices will never go in vain. Law enforcement agencies are playing a frontline role in the war against terrorism. The injured officers will be provided with every possible support and the best medical care.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister Rana Tanveer Hussain addressing a press conference on sugar supply and trade policy.

Governor KP Inaugurates "Wonders of Turkiye" Photo Exhibition at National Press Club, Islamabad

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Mr. Faisal Karim Kundi, inaugurated the one-day photo exhibition "Wonders of Turkiye" held at the National Press Club (NPC), Islamabad. Organized by the Yunus Emre Institute – a Turkish Cultural Center in collaboration with the National Press Club, the event showcased the rich cultural heritage and scenic beauty of Turkiye. The Governor was the Chief Guest at the event, while the Ambassador of Turkiye to Pakistan, H.E. Dr. Irfan

Neziroglu, attended as Guest of Honour. The Governor praised the exhibition, calling it a commendable initiative that beautifully highlighted Turkish culture. He stated that the historic friendship between Pakistan and Turkiye is deeply rooted and continues to grow stronger. "The Turkish people are warm and hospitable, and they have always stood by Pakistan in difficult times," he noted. On the occasion, he also invited the Turkish Ambassador and TICA leadership to visit the Governor House in Peshawar. Ambassador Dr. Irfan

Neziroglu expressed appreciation for the exhibition and



said that Pakistan and Turkiye are brotherly Islamic nations with strong cooperation in various fields, including

health, education, tourism, and culture. "Our relationship

is not limited to diplomacy but is built on shared values and unwavering support in times of need," he said. Also

present at the event were Professor Dr. Halil Tokar, Head of the Yunus Emre Institute; Ms. Salih Tuna, Head of TICA Pakistan; Mr. Azhar Jatoi, President NPC; Ms. Nayyar Ali, Secretary NPC; Mr. Waqar Abbasi, Finance Secretary; Mr. Ehtisham-ul-Haq, Senior Vice President; along with representatives from the Turkish Embassy, NPC office bearers, and a large number of journalists. Prof. Dr. Halil Tokar highlighted that the Yunus Emre Institute, established in 2013, now operates 90 centers in over 80 countries

worldwide. "Pakistan and Turkiye are like two bodies and one soul. Our bond dates back to the inception of Pakistan and continues to grow stronger," he said. President NPC Mr. Azhar Jatoi and Secretary Ms. Nayyar Ali welcomed the guests and thanked them for their visit. Mr. Jatoi remarked, "The National Press Club is not only a hub for journalists but a second home for our Turkish brothers. Our friendship transcends interests." Referring to Turkiye's support during recent Pakistan-India tensions, he said.