



Provision of quality seed to farmers Govts top priority



Naqvi orders merit-based nominations for federal training courses



Chairman Senate approves summer internship Program 2025 for university students

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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PML-Q delegation supports PM's economic initiatives

ARIF MEHMOOD KHAN

ISLAMABAD: A delegation of Pakistan Muslim League-Q on Wednesday called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and expressed full support for all the initiatives taken by him for the country's economic development and public welfare.

The delegation comprising Members of the National Assembly Chaudhry Hussain Elahi, Muhammad Ilyas Chaudhry and Ms. Farukh Khan and led by Minister for Overseas Pakistanis Chaudhry Salik Hussain called on the prime minister,

PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

PM Shehbaz to undertake UAE official visit today

Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif is scheduled to undertake an official visit to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) on Thursday, along with a high-level delegation. The visit reflects the deep-rooted fraternal ties between Pakistan and the UAE, which are marked by mutual trust, shared values, and close cooperation across multiple sectors.

The MNAs praised the prime minister and his team for presenting the federal budget for the fiscal year 2025-2026 in the National Assembly. The delegation said that both the military and political leadership were working tirelessly for the national development and the welfare of the people.

They also lauded the prime minister's exemplary leadership during the recent tensions with India and his efforts to elevate the country's prestige at the global stage. Matters related to the respective constituencies were also discussed during the meeting.



ISLAMABAD: A delegation of MNAs from PML-Q led by Federal Minister for Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resources Development Chaudhry Salik Hussain called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

Pakistan rejects Indian minister's irresponsible remarks

SAMRA ATHAR

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Wednesday categorically rejected the irresponsible remarks of the Indian External Affairs Minister made during different media engagements in Brussels, advising him to refrain from concocting misleading narratives to justify their recent aggressive actions.

"The discourse of top diplomats should aim to promote peace and harmony, rather than producing bellicose punchlines. The tone and tenor of a Foreign Minister should be commensurate with his dignified status," the Foreign Office Spokesperson said in a press statement.

For the last several years, India had been engaged in a malicious campaign to mislead the international community through a fictitious narrative of victimhood. "However, India's continued anti-Pakistan diatribe cannot hide its sponsorship of terrorism beyond its borders, nor can it cover up the state-sanctioned oppression in Indian illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir. Instead of pointing fingers at others, India should introspect on its own involvement in terrorism, subversion and targeted assassinations," it was added. The spokesperson further stressed that India must also desist from concocting misleading narratives to justify its recent aggressive actions.

Additional Customs duties on 4,000 tariff lines slashed to boost exports, says Finance Minister

KOMAL BUTT

ISLAMABAD: In a major step towards structural reforms, the federal government has eliminated additional customs duties on 4,000 tariff lines out of a total 7,000, and also reduced duties on a further 2,700, Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb announced on Wednesday.

Speaking at a post-budget press briefing, Aurangzeb described the tariff rationalisation as a "major and important step" in aligning Pakistan's trade and industrial policy with global standards. The initiative, he said, marks the beginning of a phased plan towards a simplified tariff regime, ultimately targeting an average tariff rate of just over 4 per cent. "Overall, there are 7,000 tariff lines. Additional customs duty has been removed on 4,000 lines, and in 2,700 of those, the customs duty has also been reduced," the finance minister explained. "Of these, around



2,000 tariff lines are directly linked to raw materials and intermediary goods used by the exporters."

"This is a structural reform that hasn't been undertaken in the past 30 years. This is a huge step, and we're committed to taking it forward gradually."

The government's broader goal, according to Aurangzeb, is to reshape Pakistan's tariff architecture in a way that supports industrial growth and integrates the economy more deeply

into global supply chains.

The minister said, the tariff reforms were more than a fiscal measure, they mark a fundamental shift in Pakistan's economic model, aimed at dismantling the long-standing protectionist regime and laying the foundation for sustainable, export-led growth. Highlighting the significance of the policy shift, Aurangzeb said the reduction and elimination of customs duties on thousands of tariff lines will enable more efficient allocation of both capital and human resources within the economy. "This is not just about reducing duties—it's about transforming the overall macroeconomic framework," the minister stated. When we bring down protection, we improve resource allocation, which is crucial for economic efficiency and competitiveness. The reforms are designed to gradually replace import substitution with export promotion, a pivot the government considers essential for addressing Pakistan's recurring balance of payments crises and dollar liquidity pressures. "If we want to structurally reposition the country towards export-led growth, we need to change the very DNA of the economy," Aurangzeb said. "That's how we avoid falling into the same cycle of dollar shortages every time we try to grow." The minister touched on broader fiscal measures aimed at ensuring equity and sustainability, particularly for salaried individuals and mid-sized businesses.

India trying to sabotage President Trump's peace efforts: Bilawal

PEAK POINT

LONDON: Former foreign minister and PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has said that Pakistan is looking to US President Donald Trump for Kashmir resolution while Indian government is trying to sabotage the American president's peace efforts.

Bilawal reiterated that Pakistan believes in dialogue as the only path to resolving core issues, including the Kashmir dispute. He said India is using terrorists as a diplomatic tool.

Speaking at a press briefing at the Pakistan High Commission in London, accompanied by members of a parliamentary delegation on Wednesday, Bilawal emphasised that both Pakistani and Indian people desire peace and that ongoing hostilities are counter-productive to regional stability.

Bilawal strongly warned India against any move to



disrupt the Indus Waters Treaty, stating, "Even threatening to cut off water supply amounts to a clear declaration of war."

The PPP chairman said India cannot suspend or annul the treaty, which is internationally recognised and legally binding.

Commenting on the country's military leadership, Bilawal said that General Asim Munir was elevated to the rank of Field Marshal not

only for winning battles but also for aligning with the aspirations of the people.

Highlighting past military engagements, he remarked, "Although India may have had numerical strength, Pakistani forces gave a powerful and measured response."

Bilawal claimed that India often says one thing but does another, alleging that New Delhi continues to use terrorist organisations to sabotage

peace in the region.

Bilawal said threatening Pakistan is a violation of the UN Charter, even though Pakistan is talking about peace and India is talking about war. Earlier, the PPP chairman arrived at the Pakistan High Commission in London, where he recorded his remarks in the guestbook, accompanied by senior members of Pakistan's high-level diplomatic delegation.

It is worth mentioning that the Pakistani diplomatic delegation, led by Bilawal, recently concluded a visit to the United States and has now reached the United Kingdom to highlight the Indian aggression.

During their US tour, the delegation actively participated in United Nations sessions and engaged in high-level meetings with global leaders and members of the US Congress. Discussions primarily focused on the Kashmir dispute and the urgent need for regional peace and stability.

EU Ambassador Dr. Riina meets Federal Minister Qaiser Sheikh to strengthen economic ties

AYESHA REHAN

ISLAMABAD: The European Union's Ambassador to Pakistan, Dr. Riina Kionka, called on Federal Minister for Investment, Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh, in his office on Wednesday to discuss enhancing bilateral economic relations and fostering investment opportunities between the EU and Pakistan. Ms. Ambreen Iftikhar, Additional Secretary, Mr. Mahmood Tufail, DG and Mr. Ifranullah Marwat from BOI while Mr. Jeroen Willems, Head of Cooperation and Mr. Husnain Iftikhar, Senior Trade Advisor from EU Delegation were also present in the meeting. The Minister appreciated the EU's longstanding support to Pakistan's economic development and highlighted the Government's resolve on bringing macroeconomic stability and improving major economic indicators such as fiscal balance, stock exchange performance and investment climate. Discussions were held on further strengthening the EU-Pakistan Economic & Business Relations and establishment of the EU-Pakistan Business Network, which engages over 400 EU companies operating across various sectors in Pakistan. The EU delegation expressed interest in scaling up this platform and informed that key dates for upcoming Business Forum/Investment sessions will be announced in the near future after consultation with EU Headquarters. Mr. Jerome Willems introduced the EU's 25 Champion Companies initiative—a program aimed at supporting 25 high-potential EU enterprises in Pakistan that align with sustainable development, innovation, and inclusivity.



PCB issues NOCs for top stars to feature in overseas franchise cricket

RIZWAN HAIDER

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has issued No Objection Certificates (NOCs) to 13 players, including senior stars Babar Azam, Mohammad Rizwan, and Shaheen Shah Afridi, enabling them to take part in various international franchise leagues through the end of 2025.

The star trio, who were notably absent from Pakistan's recent T20 series against Bangladesh, are set to be part of the Big Bash League (BBL) draft scheduled for June 19. Their NOCs will remain valid from December 14 to 28.

Former international pacer Mohammad Amir, currently playing for Essex in the T20 Blast, has been cleared until July 18. Fellow quick Harris Rauf has received approval to feature in the Major League Cricket (MLC) 2025, which begins this week.

Shan Masood, the Test skipper, has been granted permission to continue representing Leicestershire in the County Championship until September 1.

Other Pakistani fast bowlers involved in County cricket have also secured clearance:

Mohammad Abbas - until July 2 Hasan Ali - until September 30 Khurram Shahzad - until September 27 All-rounder Mohammad Nawaz has been given NOCs for the Guyana Super League and the Caribbean Premier League (CPL).

Rising batting talent Khawaja Nafay has also received PCB's nod to take part in the Global Super League.

Jazz launches Pakistan's first national tape-ball cricket tournament 2025 in Sialkot

MUHAMMAD USMAN



ISLAMABAD: Jazz, Pakistan's leading digital operator, has announced the launch of its first independently hosted national tape-ball cricket tournament—Jazz Tapeball Clash (JTC)—set to take place in Sialkot from June 23 to 28, 2025.

The six-day tournament, to be held at Faraz Cricket Ground, will feature nightly matches under floodlights, bringing together some of Pakistan's most prominent tape-ball cricket icons, including Taimoor Mirza, Fahad Mian Channu, Khurram Chakwal, Umri Pacer, and Chota Vikki, said a news release.

With the introduction of JTC, Jazz transitions from being a sponsor to a full-fledged organiser of Pakistan's most popular street sport. The event is aimed at recognising and formalising grassroots cricket by offering players team kits, match officials, digital scoring, and live coverage, thus bridging the gap between street cricket and mainstream recognition. "Cricket is in our DNA, and tape-ball is where the story begins for millions of Pakistanis," said Kazim Mujtaba, President Consumer Division at Jazz.

"JTC is about giving street cricket the platform and structure it deserves—celebrating homegrown heroes and inspiring the next generation."

Ali Fahd, Head of Marketing at Jazz, added that tape-ball cricket is more than just a pastime. "With JTC, we're transforming that raw passion into a national movement. This is not just about cricket—this is about youth empowerment, local pride, and showing that even before the stadium lights, the streets make stars."

Sana Mir says her ICC Hall of Fame inclusion is for 'every girl who picks up a bat or ball'

ARIF MEHMOOD KHAN

ISLAMABAD: Days after making history as the first Pakistani woman to be inducted into the ICC Hall of Fame, former national captain Sana Mir has opened up about what the moment means to her.

Speaking on Monday, Mir shared a heartfelt note reflecting on her journey from a young girl who once dreamt of merely having a women's cricket team in Pakistan, to now being counted among the greatest legends in the game.

"My first reaction when I got to know about this honour: Alhamdulillah," she wrote. "Playing cricket for Pakistan was always the greatest reward in itself."

Her induction, while deeply personal, marks a watershed moment for Pakistani sport. In a country where the sport has long been dominated by men and cricketing heroes have traditionally been men, Mir's recognition lights the path forward for aspiring female cricketers — many of whom have had to push against social norms, institutional neglect and limited resources.

"From dreaming as a little girl that one day there would even be a women's team in our country, to now standing here, inducted among the very legends I idolised long before I ever held a bat or a ball — this is a moment I once couldn't have dared to imagine," she wrote.

Mir also paid tribute to her teammates, coaches and



for deeming her worthy of family "for turning my dream into a fight worth carrying the responsibility of fighting" and closed with "with the same grit that brought me here."

Her note quickly shifted from the personal to the collective. "Tonight is not just mine. This is for every girl who picks up a bat or a ball in a street where they're told cricket isn't 'for them'. For every woman who defies expectations, whether on the pitch, in their homes, or in any space where dreams are told to wait, keep claiming your place in this world. Our journeys are never easy, but they are possible."

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Rs1.1bn allocated for sports infrastructure in federal budget



JAVID KHAN

ISLAMABAD: The federal government has earmarked Rs1.1 billion for sports infrastructure development under the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) for the fiscal year 2025-26. According to budget documents, only two new schemes have been introduced this year. The first involves the establishment of the Arshad Nadeem/Shehbaz Sharif High Performance Sports Academy at the Pakistan Sports Complex, Islamabad. The total cost of the project is estimated at Rs2.82 billion, though the allocation for the upcoming fiscal year has not been specified in the documents.

President PFF Syed Mohsen Gillani visits Football House

SEHRISH NAZ



LAHORE: Syed Mohsen Gilani, the newly elected President of the Pakistan Football Federation (PFF), paid his first official visit to the Football House in Lahore on June 8, 2025, following his historic election victory in May.

Mohsen Gillani received a warm welcome from Muhammad Shahid Niaz Khokhar, Acting General Secretary and NC Member, along with Barrister Harris Azmat, a fellow Normalisation Committee (NC) member.

During his visit, Mohsen Gilani congratulated the PFF management and staff for the successful and transparent conduct of the PFF elections. President Gilani reaffirmed his vision for football in Pakistan, centring on responsibility and empowerment principles. He emphasized the symbolic importance of two flags that guide his mission, the national flag of Pakistan and the flag of the Pakistan Football Federation.

He said that the doors of the Football House must be open to supporters. We need to reconnect with our football community and create an environment of trust and shared ambition.

Australia aim to defend WTC crown, Proteas eye historic first at Lord's

PEAK POINT

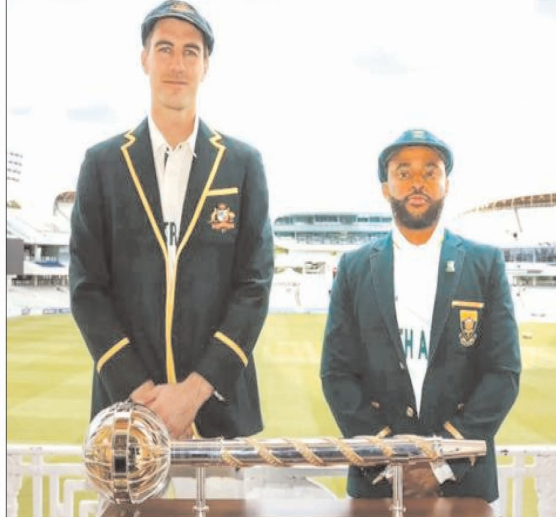
LONDON: The iconic Lord's Cricket Ground is set to witness a high-stakes clash as defending champions Australia take on South Africa in the ICC World Test Championship (WTC) 2023-25 final, starting today (Wednesday).

After 68 matches across 27 series involving nine nations, the tournament's grand finale brings together two teams with contrasting journeys and distinct motivations. Australia are looking to retain their title, while South Africa are chasing their first ICC trophy in over two decades, their last coming at the 1998 ICC KnockOut.

South Africa topped the WTC standings with a 69.44% winning percentage, winning eight of their 12 matches. While their campaign was marked by consistency, it wasn't without criticism. Former England skipper Michael Vaughan questioned the quality of their opposition, noting they had avoided series against Australia and England. Nonetheless, the Proteas arrive at Lord's with a formidable pace attack. Kagiso Rabada, returning to the XI, has led the charge with 47 wickets in 10 matches. Spinner Keshav Maharaj adds variety, while left-armers Marco Jansen offers bounce and swing. With the bat, David Bedingham has emerged as South Africa's standout performer with 645 runs. Captain Temba Bavuma (609) and Aiden Markram (572) bring experience and solidity to the top order.

Australia sealed their spot in the final with a key victory over Sri Lanka in Galle and finished second on the table after 13 wins from 39 matches, including series triumphs

over Pakistan, India, and England. Their pace battery remains their greatest strength.



Captain Pat Cummins (73 wickets) and Mitchell Starc (72) have been relentless, supported by Josh Hazlewood's precision and Nathan Lyon's spin threat. The batting lineup is equally robust. Usman Khawaja has been a rock at the top, while Steve Smith and Travis Head continue to deliver under pressure. All-rounder Cameron Green and keeper Alex Carey offer valuable depth.

According to the UK Met Office, Day 1 is expected to proceed without weather interruptions, with just a 4% chance of rain. Day 2, however, carries a 50% chance of afternoon showers. Cloudy conditions and occasional rain are forecast for Day 3, while the final two days are likely to remain dry.

To ensure a result, the ICC has designated Monday, June 16, as a reserve day.

In 101 previous Test encounters, Australia dominate the head-to-head record with 54 wins to South Africa's 26. Their last series, held in Australia in late 2022, ended 2-0 in the hosts' favour. Interestingly, the only Test between the two sides at Lord's came back in 1912, during the Triangular Tournament. Australia won that match by 10 wickets.

PROBABLE XI
AUSTRALIA: Usman Khawaja, Marnus Labuschagne, Steve Smith, Travis Head, Cameron Green, Beau Webster, Alex Carey (wk), Pat Cummins (c), Mitchell Starc, Nathan Lyon, Josh Hazlewood.

SOUTH AFRICA: Aiden Markram, Ryan Rickelton, Temba Bavuma (c), Tristan Stubbs, David Bedingham, Wiaan Mulder, Kyle Verreyne (wk), Marco Jansen, Keshav Maharaj, Kagiso Rabada, Lungi Ngidi.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for National Health Services, Regulations & Coordination, Syed Mustafa Kamal visited Federal Directorate of Immunization.

KSRelief completed strategic funding support to AHTF

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: The King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Center (KSRelief) has completed its strategic funding support to the Afghanistan Humanitarian Trust Fund (AHTF) and the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) for the establishment of an innovative telemedicine platform across Afghanistan. The platform is being rolled out across 20 provinces, aiming at enhancing healthcare access for communities in need.



Abdullah Butt, CEO of Educast, the organization seeing the development of the platform, stated, "This transformative initiative is providing strength and building the capacity of Afghan healthcare providers, enhancing medical education, and improving access to quality healthcare services for communities in need." The newly developed eCast telemedicine platform, supported by KSRelief, connects Afghan healthcare providers with international medical experts in real-time.

Cambridge Under Fire: Pakistan's Parliament Slams CIE Over Exam Paper Leaks, Delayed Inquiry, and Regulatory Evasion

NADEEM TANOLI

ISLAMABAD: A storm of criticism engulfed Cambridge International Education (CIE) during a pivotal session of the Pakistan National Assembly's Sub-Committee on Education, as lawmakers and regulators expressed growing alarm over repeated exam paper leaks, delayed inquiries, and the board's non-compliance with Pakistani legal frameworks. The scandal centers on the confirmed leak of AS & A Level examination papers, which triggered widespread distress among students and parents. Rather than offering a retest or pursuing accountability,

Cambridge opted for "calculated assessment," assigning grades based on students' performance in other papers. The decision, widely seen as opaque and academically unjustifiable, drew harsh condemnation. "How can a student's performance on one paper justify grades on another?" asked MNA Ali Sarfaraz, calling the approach both unfair and pedagogically flawed. The Inter Board Committee of Chairmen (IBCC), the statutory regulator for foreign examination boards under the IBCC Act of 2023, revealed that CIE failed to submit a formal inquiry report on the 2024 paper leak — despite repeated official communica-


tions and even judicial intervention by the Sindh High Court. Under the Act of Parliament, we are the regulator. Cambridge continues to ignore our inquiries and has yet to submit last year's paper leakage report — which was supposed to be concluded within three months," stated IBCC CEO / Secretary Ghulam Ali Mallah. Cambridge's Country Director, Uzma Yousuf, faced intense scrutiny for withholding inquiry details during the committee meeting, citing media presence as a barrier. Her claim that such disclosures would be made in a future session without press coverage raised serious questions about

transparency and institutional accountability. Further compounding concerns, the IBCC disclosed that over 400 new examination centers are expected to open under the "Independent Schools Program" next year — yet only 22 have formally submitted their data. This regulatory gap underscores a broader compliance failure. "Many of our existing regulations have yet to be implemented," noted the IBCC chief, calling for immediate reforms. Lawmakers also raised the issue of Cambridge's steep and unregulated fee structure, with O level papers reportedly costing PKR 30,000-35,000 per subject and

A Level fees reaching PKR 50,000-60,000. The lack of standardized pricing has placed immense financial pressure on families. "There is no fee regulation in place yet, but this is clearly within our mandate," confirmed an IBCC representative. While Cambridge's official submission claims that it operates "in close alignment" with local laws and authorities, its continued refusal to directly engage with the IBCC — instead routing correspondence through the Ministry of Education — has eroded its credibility. Meanwhile, its characterization of confirmed leaks as "rare" appears increasingly disingenuous in light of

recurring security breaches and growing public mistrust. Sub-Committee Convener MNA Saheen Ghauri recommended that Cambridge offer localized versions of its exams exclusively for Pakistani students, in order to prevent cross-border leak impacts from Zone IV countries, she also demanded written guarantee that such incidents would not recur. With over 150,000 Pakistani students relying on Cambridge qualifications annually, the stakes are higher than ever. At the heart of the controversy are the 2024 and 2025 exam paper leakages — and the deeply flawed response that followed.

Opinion & Editorial



 Arif Mehmood Khan

 Group Editor: 0333-5366814

 Samra athar Kakakhel

 Resident Editor

 Email: editor.peakpoint@gmail.com

 www.peakpoint.pk

Ambitious goals

THE budget for the next financial year, announced on Tuesday, seeks to deepen fiscal consolidation in order to pave the way for a successful second review of the 57bn IMF programme in September. This is apparent from the significant reduction in the consolidated national fiscal deficit target to 3.9pc of GDP from the original target of 5.9pc. The provinces, which have often been criticised for adding to federal fiscal woes because of their increased share under the NFC award, will contribute cash surplus of nearly Rs1.5tr, up 50pc from the Rs1tr they were required to contribute this year to hold down the national deficit. Indeed, the government has partially met the income tax relief demand from the salaried classes, but the fiscal space for this is basically provided by savings of Rs1tr in debt payments due to reduced domestic interest rates over the last year. These savings have also allowed the authorities to give relief to powerful real estate lobbies demanding tax concessions. That said, the budget is disappointing for those who thought the economic stability achieved over the last year and a half would encourage implementation of deeper structural reforms for sustainable economic growth. There is not much in the budget to give hope for such a structural shift. But that does not mean the document is devoid of good points. For example, it sets into motion long-standing tariff reforms that hopefully will end protections to some rent-seeking industries over the next five years. It also seeks to bring non-filers into the net by imposing restrictions, such as on the purchase of securities above a certain threshold, purchase of autos above 80cc, etc.

Pak Army's Civil Engagement Drive

The Pakistan Army's civil engagement initiative is comprehensive and targets a broad spectrum of society through various channels. Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir and other senior generals frequently hold direct, candid interactions that go beyond formalities. The Field Marshal, in particular, has met with Vice Chancellors, principals, and senior faculty members across universities nationwide, stressing the vital role of educators in character-building and promoting Pakistan's true narrative. He has famously acknowledged, "Whatever I am today is because of my parents and teachers," underscoring teachers as the nation's greatest asset. These dialogues, known as "Hilal Talks," provide forums for exchanging views on national, regional, and international matters. In regions like Balochistan, senior military leaders—including the Field Marshal—participate in grand jirgas (traditional assemblies) with tribal elders to discuss security concerns, counter foreign-backed terrorism, and ensure local communities are engaged as partners in peace-building. Such interactions highlight the Army's commitment to protecting both the people and their land while seeking community support to eliminate hostile threats. Senior military officials regularly deliver keynote addresses at national seminars, think tanks, and public forums, articulating the military's stance on national security, economic stability, and regional affairs. These venues help disseminate the Army's strategic vision and its dedication to national progress. The direct involvement of the Field Marshal and other senior leaders lends substantial credibility and authority to these engagements, demonstrating the Army's sincere commitment to connecting with the public at the highest level, fostering trust and shared responsibility in national matters. These sessions also clarify complex issues directly from authoritative sources. The Director General of Inter-Services Public Relations (DG ISPR) plays a central role as the official spokesperson and public relation head of the Pakistan Armed Forces. The DG ISPR's engagements with civilians—particularly youth and media—are vital for shaping public perception and delivering timely, accurate information. The



Abdul Basit Alvi

current DG ISPR, Lt Gen Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry, frequently conducts interactive sessions with students and educators, especially following significant national security events. These meetings provide direct communication channels to dispel misinformation and reinforce confidence. For example, after successful operations against external aggression or internal terrorism, the DG ISPR personally engages with students, reaffirming the strength of the military and the resilience of the nation. He has fervently expressed that the Pakistan Army's strength is rooted in its people, referring to civilians as the "iron wall" and underscoring the importance of national unity. While not formal civil engagement, the DG ISPR's regular press briefings serve as a key platform to inform the public about military operations, security issues, and policy positions. These sessions are intended to be clear and transparent, often featuring in-depth Q&A segments with journalists whose engagement reaches a wide civilian audience. During and following Operation Banyan Marsoos, these sessions have played a crucial role in conveying an accurate and detailed account of the situation. The DG ISPR's office actively leverages social media platforms to share information, highlight positive stories, and engage in real-time dialogue, reaching millions of digitally connected youth Pakistanis. The DG efforts ensure the military's perspective is communicated clearly, countering misinformation and presenting the leadership as approachable and accountable. Similarly, commanders of various corps and garrisons regularly conduct interaction sessions with civilians, ensuring that civil engagement extends beyond the top leadership to local communities, creating a consistent and widespread outreach. In various cities across the country, senior military officials from the Pakistan Army visited key educational institutions, partici-

pating in special interactive sessions with teachers and students. Through these visits, the Corps Commanders of Mangla, Multan, Lahore, Karachi, Quetta, Gujranwala, and Bahawalpur, with the goal of engaging the youth on issues related to civ and order, ongoing development initiatives, and the Army's role in national affairs. During these visits, the Corps Commanders encouraged students to harness modern technology, expand their knowledge, and use social media positively. They emphasized the importance of playing a proactive and constructive role in shaping Pakistan's future. In Lahore, the Corps Commander referred to Operation Banyan Marsoos as a reflection of the nation's unity, discipline, and faith. He viewed student-created artwork under the theme "Marka Haq" and stressed the significance of modern science and technology in light of the recent Pak-India conflict. While not formal civil engagement, the DG ISPR's regular press briefings serve as a key platform to inform the public about military operations, security issues, and policy positions. These sessions are intended to be clear and transparent, often featuring in-depth Q&A segments with journalists whose engagement reaches a wide civilian audience. During and following Operation Banyan Marsoos, these sessions have played a crucial role in conveying an accurate and detailed account of the situation. The DG ISPR's office actively leverages social media platforms to share information, highlight positive stories, and engage in real-time dialogue, reaching millions of digitally connected youth Pakistanis. The DG efforts ensure the military's perspective is communicated clearly, countering misinformation and presenting the leadership as approachable and accountable. Similarly, commanders of various corps and garrisons regularly conduct interaction sessions with civilians, ensuring that civil engagement extends beyond the top leadership to local communities, creating a consistent and widespread outreach. In various cities across the country, senior military officials from the Pakistan Army visited key educational institutions, partici-

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Naqvi orders merit-based nominations for federal training courses



HUMA REHAN

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Interior Affairs Syed Mohsin Raza Naqvi has directed all affiliated departments to ensure that only officers meeting strict merit criteria are nominated for training courses to enhance office efficiency and productivity. The minister issued these directives during an important meeting held at the Ministry of Interior, attended by the heads and representatives of all sub-departments under

the ministry on Wednesday. In the meeting, a consensus was reached to strengthen mutual coordination among the institutions working under the Ministry of Interior. Naqvi emphasised that this step was crucial for maximising institutional capacities and facilitating the public more effectively. He stated that only merit-based nominations should be made for training courses so that the participating officers contribute significantly to capacity building and output improvement.

Highlighting the significance of inter-agency collaboration, Mohsin Naqvi said that the timely exchange of information and data is imperative. He noted that officers posted in foreign embassies under different departments could play a vital role in facilitating international cooperation and intelligence sharing. The interior minister added that the full utilisation of human resources across departments would benefit not only the institutions but also the general public by ensuring better governance through enhanced coordination. He directed all departments to submit concrete recommendations, based on which the Secretary of the Interior will compile a comprehensive strategic plan for inter-agency collaboration. The meeting was attended by Minister of State for Interior Tal Chaudhry, the Interior Secretary, Additional Secretaries, and senior leadership from NADRA, Anti-Narcotics Control, FIA, Frontier Corps, Frontier Constabulary, Rangers, National Police Academy, National Police Bureau, Passport and Immigration Department, National Cyber Crime Investigation Agency.

US Centcom chief lauds 'phenomenal partner' Pakistan in counter-terrorism efforts

PEAK POINT

WASHINGTON: United States Central Command (Centcom) commander Army General Michael Kurilla on Wednesday praised Pakistan as a "phenomenal partner in the world of counter-terrorism", citing the nation's struggle against terrorism in Balochistan and against terrorist groups like the Islamic State-Khorasan (IS-K).

Pakistan and the US reaffirmed the continuation of counter-terrorism cooperation during a dialogue in Washington on May 10. The dialogue underscored the cooperation between the two countries in addressing the most pressing challenges to regional and global security, including the threats posed by terrorist outfits such as the Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and IS-K. The two nations are slated to have another counter-terrorism dialogue this month. During a House Armed Services Committee hearing in Washington on Tuesday, the general was asked about the situation



on the Afghan border with Pakistan, where he outlined that Pakistan has apprehended several "high-value" IS-K operatives. Hailing a "phenomenal partnership" with Islamabad, Gen Kurilla highlighted that Pakistan has "gone after ISIS Khorasan (IS-K) killing dozens of them." "Through a relationship we have with them and providing intelligence, they have captured at least five ISIS Khorasan high-value individuals," Kurilla said. "They have extradited back Jaffer, who was one of the key individuals behind the Abbey Gate bombing," he added, referring to IS-K operative Mohammad Sharifullah, an Afghan national who was arrested by Pakistan earlier this year.

Provision of quality seed to farmers Govts top priority

ARSHAD MALIK

ISLAMABAD: The third meeting of the Board of Governors of the National Seed Development and Regulatory Authority (NSDRA) was held on Wednesday with Minister for National Food Security and Research Rana Tanveer Hussain in chair.

The minister emphasized transparency, quality, and institutional reforms in the seed sector and directed that timely provision of certified and high-quality seed to farmers must be ensured at all costs. In his remarks, the Federal Minister categorically rejected the proposal to reinstate fake seed companies, stating that any form of exploitation or deceit against farmers is unacceptable. He reiterated the government's firm commitment to building a transparent, strong, and farmer-friendly seed system, with zero tolerance for compromise in this regard. During the meeting, four new members of NSDRA were approved to further strengthen the governance of the authority. A structured and transparent service framework for new employees was also finalized, aimed at enhancing institutional efficiency and professional capacity. The

minister placed special emphasis on the development and supply of high-quality cotton and oilseed varieties. He stated that the country's agricultural output heavily depends on seed quality, and therefore, research, development, and collaboration with the private sector should be prioritized to improve seed standards. Various stakeholders, including the Chairman of the Authority, Director General Strategic Projects, and representatives from prominent seed companies, participated in the meeting. The participants presented several suggestions for the improvement of the seed sector, which were well received. On the occasion, the minister instructed all relevant institutions to ensure the implementation of effective policies through mutual coordination, keeping in view the national needs of farmers.

The minister reaffirmed that NSDRA will be developed into a modern, efficient, and transparent regulatory body that will play a key role in steering Pakistan toward agricultural self-sufficiency. The government considers the welfare of farmers and the provision of quality seed as a vital pillar of national development.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for National Food Security & Research, Rana Tanveer Hussain, chairs the 3rd Board of Governors meeting of NSDRA at MNFSR, emphasizing quality seed provision and sectoral reforms.

Punjab to present people-friendly budget: Azma Bokhari

PEAK POINT

LAHORE: Punjab Minister Azma Bokhari has announced that the provincial government will present a budget for the upcoming fiscal year on June 13.

She promised that the budget would be progressive, people-friendly, and tax-free. In a statement issued on Wednesday, she said that Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif had given clear directives to broaden the province's tax net without imposing any new taxes on the public.

Azma highlighted that several flagship initiatives of the Punjab government — including the 'Suthra Punjab' campaign, infrastructure development, and the construction of new hospitals — will be key features of the budget. She added that basic facilities will be ensured in all public schools across the province.

Citing a recent report by 'The Economist', she noted that 98 per cent of schools in Punjab are in satisfactory condition. She assured that the welfare-oriented vision of Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif will be clearly reflected in the budget.

Chairman Senate approves summer internship Program 2025 for university students

JAVED KHAN

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate, Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani, has formally approved the launch of the Summer Internship Program 2025 in the Senate of Pakistan for 21 university students. The program, beginning June 16, 2025, will run for eight weeks and will include selected students from the Foundation for Advancement of Science and Technology (FAST), National University of Modern Languages (NUML) and the National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST). Part of the Senate's flagship Outreach Program, the initiative aims to provide young graduates in social sciences and technology with first-hand exposure to the legislative and administrative workings of the Senate, particularly during the federal budget session. Prior to commencement, the participants will undergo a two-day orientation at the Pakistan Institute of Parliamentary Services (PIPS),



focusing on the Constitution of Pakistan and the procedures of the Senate, its Secretariat, and Standing Committees. This internship follows earlier successful cohorts, including 20 students from Quaid-i-Azam University, National Defence University, Bahria University and NUST (June-August 2022) and 18 students from seven Islamabad-based schools (July-August 2024). Since assuming office in March 2024, the Chairman has actively advanced the inclusivity of the legislative process through an expanded unpaid internship program.

340 pilgrims back through first hajj flights

MOHSIN ALI

ISLAMABAD: The first post-Hajj flight, PK-732, carrying 340 pilgrims from Saudi Arabia, arrived at Islamabad International Airport on Tuesday, marking the beginning of the repatriation process for Pakistani pilgrims. Federal Minister for Parliamentary Affairs, Dr. Tariq Fazal Chaudhry, warmly received the pilgrims at the airport. During interactions, the returning pilgrims expressed satisfaction with the Hajj arrangements made by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and commended the quality of services provided during their stay in the Kingdom. Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Tariq Fazal Chaudhry said the government of Pakistan had made every effort to ensure that pilgrims were provided with the best possible



facilities throughout their spiritual journey. Dr. Chaudhry also acknowledged the cooperation of the Saudi government in ensuring smooth and well-coordinated Hajj operations in collaboration with Pakistani authorities. The minister reaffirmed the government's commitment to further improving Hajj arrangements in the years ahead. "It is our duty to extend all possible support to pilgrims in fulfilling this sacred religious obligation," he added.

Mian Basharat congratulates Shama Haider on Primary Victory

RAJA MOHSIN IJAZ

NEW JERSEY: In a significant moment for New Jersey politics, Assemblywoman Shama Haider secured a decisive win in the Democratic primary on Tuesday, fending off two intra-party challengers and positioning herself for a third term in the state legislature. The primary result not only reaffirmed her political standing but also drew praise from across the state's political and civic spectrum, including a notable congratulatory message from influential business and community leader, Mian Basharat.



Basharat, a widely respected figure in both political and entrepreneurial circles, was present at Haider's victory

party. Speaking on the occasion, he commended her leadership and extended heartfelt congratulations on behalf of the broader South Asian and immigrant communities. "This victory is not just a personal milestone for Assemblywoman Haider," Basharat said. "It is a reflection

of her integrity, her commitment to public service, and her tireless advocacy for the underrepresented. On behalf of our entire com-

munity, I offer my warmest congratulations and full support as she continues her inspiring journey." Assemblywoman Haider, who made history in 2023 as the first Pakistani-American woman elected to the New Jersey General Assembly, has consistently championed education reform, small business development, and immigrant rights. Her reelection campaign received official endorsement from the Democratic Party, reinforcing her strong base of institutional support. Political analysts noted that Haider's ability to withstand internal challenges speaks to both her grassroots appeal and her strategic coalition-building within one of New Jersey's most diverse con-

stituencies. Mian Basharat's presence at the celebration underscored the growing influence of South Asian Americans in shaping the region's political landscape. Known for his philanthropic endeavors and cross-cultural engagement, Basharat has long been a bridge between business leadership and civic advocacy. As the general election approaches, Assemblywoman Haider's campaign is expected to intensify its outreach, buoyed by Tuesday's victory and the support of prominent voices like Mian Basharat. Her campaign released a brief statement expressing gratitude to voters and reaffirming her commitment to "building a fairer, more inclusive New Jersey for all."