



Simla Agreement no longer holds significance owing to Indian actions: Asif



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Govt achieves Rs4 trn national development outlay three years ahead of schedule: Ahsan Iqbal

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PM declares India's water threats violation of IWT, orders urgent national response with united front

ARIF MEHMOOD KHAN

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday termed India's unilateral suspension of the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) as "a blatant violation and act of water aggression" and warned that Pakistan will give a befitting response under the decisions taken in the April 24 National Security Committee (NSC) meeting. Chairing a high-level meeting on water resources at the Prime Minister's House here, he vowed that, just as Pakistan achieved victory in the recent war, it would also triumph on the water front. The high-level meeting brought together Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, Field Marshal COAS General Syed Asim Munir, federal ministers, chief ministers of all four provinces, Prime Minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Chief Minister of

Gilgit-Baltistan, and senior federal and provincial officials. "This is a battle of justice, and like every battle we have fought with unity, we will defeat India's water aggression with resolve and wisdom," said the prime minister. He emphasized that living nations confront challenges head-on and make strategic, lasting decisions to protect their future generations. PM Shehbaz Sharif said that the Indian threats to weaponize water by attempting to violate the 1960 Indus Waters Treaty are increasing each day. He highlighted that the Treaty, a binding international agreement, does not allow any party to unilaterally withdraw, and India's claims are politically and legally hollow. All provincial chief ministers, along with the leadership of AJK and Gilgit-Baltistan, strongly condemned India's water threats and unanimously reaffirmed their support for the federal government's position.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting on water resources and storage.

No decision made to revoke Simla Accord with India, says Foreign Office

SAMRA ATHAR

ISLAMABAD: The Foreign Office has rejected speculations regarding the cancellation of the Simla Agreement.

According to officials, no decision has been made to revoke any bilateral agreement with India. The Foreign Office clarified that there has been no formal move to cancel the agreement. Earlier, Defence Minister Khawaja Asif announced on Thursday that Pakistan had officially withdrawn from the Simla Agreement with India, declaring that the Line of Control (LoC) would now be treated as a ceasefire line, effectively reverting to Pakistan's 1948 stance. Speaking to a private TV channel, Asif emphasised that the accord was a bilateral arrangement with no involvement from a third party or the World Bank. He stated that its cancellation marks the restoration of the LoC's original status as a ceasefire line. The Simla Agreement, signed following the 1971 war, outlined key principles for managing Pakistan-India relations, including adherence to the ceasefire line in Kashmir. Khawaja Asif's remarks came in the wake of India's recent unilateral decision to end the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT), coupled with unprovoked attacks inside Pakistan last month, which escalated tensions and sparked military skirmishes between the two nuclear powers.

Hajj sermon urges Muslims to seek 'mercy' for Palestinians

PEAK POINT

KAABA: The imam-e-Kaaba has urged Muslims around the world to unite and uphold principles of Islam and offered special prayers for Palestinians of Gaza who are facing relentless deadly attacks by Israeli forces.

Imam of Masjid al-Haram and a member of the Saudi Council of Senior Scholars Sheikh Dr Saleh bin Abdullah bin Humaid in his Hajj 2025 sermon on Thursday urged Muslims to adopt "Taqwa" and keep fearing Allah.

Delivering the Hajj sermon from the pulpit of Masjid al-Namirah near Mount Arafat in Arafat Plain, the imam called on Muslims to keep praying and paying Zakat to the needy people. The Imam broke down into tears while offering prayers for the Palestinians, saying, "O the Almighty Allah, have mercy on Muslims who are facing oppression anywhere."

The imam urged Muslims to adopt piety, uphold unity, and distance themselves from the



whispers of Satan.

The Imam called upon believers to fear Allah and live with taqwa (God-consciousness), reminding them that Shaytan (Satan) remains the eternal enemy of the faithful.

"Satan seeks to mislead Muslims. It is imperative that we resist his deception and stand firm in our faith," he said. Highlighting the beauty of Islam, the Imam stressed that Allah has chosen Islam as a religion for the benefit of all

humanity, and it is upon Muslims to uphold harmony, brotherhood, and unity among themselves. "Islam calls for compassion, not division," he emphasised. In a poignant moment, the Imam said that forgiving one's enemies is a path to getting closer to Allah.

"When a believer forgives his enemy, Allah makes him His friend," he declared, echoing the Islamic values of mercy and reconciliation.

He said, "O people! Modesty is a part of faith, and fulfilling promises is also a part of faith. Allah has forbidden all His creations from engaging in 'Haram' (prohibited) acts, and those nations that disobeyed the commands of the prophets were ultimately disgraced by Allah."

The Imam said, "O believers, take care of the rights of your neighbours. Show kindness to orphans, the needy, and widows. Treat your parents with respect and goodness." He said, "Worship as commanded by the Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him), follow the Shariah, keep the religion before you, worship Allah, and do not associate any partners with Him." The Imam said, "Remain steadfast in your faith in Allah and His religion, and complete Hajj and Umrah solely for the sake of Allah. Fasting teaches patience and endurance. Observe the fasts of Ramadan and perform Hajj."

India laying ground of first nuclear war over water: Bilawal

PEAK POINT

NEW YORK: PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari on Thursday said that India was laying the ground for the first nuclear war over water with its actions regarding the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) with Pakistan.

India held the IWT in abeyance after the further deterioration in relations between the two countries following the April 22 Pahalgam attack in occupied Kashmir. In retaliation, Pakistan decided that it would exercise the right to hold all bilateral agreements with India, including but not limited to the Simla Agreement, in abeyance. It also announced the closure of the Wagah border and suspension of all trade with New Delhi, among other measures.

Pakistan has launched a broad-based engagement campaign in the United States to present its perspective on the recent spike in tensions with India, and counter New Delhi's growing lobbying presence there. As part of its global outreach, the team will also visit London and



Brussels. The delegation comprises former foreign ministers Bilawal, Hina Rabbani Khar and Khurram Dastgir; Senators Sherry Rehman, Musadik Malik, Faisal Sabzwari and Bushra Anjum Butt; along with senior envoys Jalil Abbas Jilani and Tehmina Janjua. Addressing the Middle East Institute in Washington, Bilawal said, "In the age of climate challenges that are to come, water scarcity and water wars used to be a theory. India shutting off

Pakistan's water supply is laying the foundations for the first nuclear war. We have said that cutting off our water supply would be an act of war. "We don't say it in a jingoistic manner. We don't say it with any relish. It is an existential crisis for us. Any country on the planet, no matter their size, their strength or their ability, would fight for their survival and fight for their water."

Bilawal said India must abide by the IWT and the US and other

countries must take a firm stance to not allow it to violate the treaty.

"You cannot allow this precedent to be set in the Pakistan context, because we'll fight the first war, but it won't be the last. If India is allowed to cut off our water, that means that every upper riparian now has a carte blanche. "And if our dialogue and diplomacy in pursuit of peace are to be successful, if we are to talk to India, have a positive dialogue with India, make new arrangements, new deals, perhaps even new treaties with India, then surely they first must abide by the old treaties and take back their decision vis-a-vis the IWT." He said Pakistan wanted to pursue peace for the benefit of both countries. Bilawal criticised the Indian government, saying it had refused cooperation on terrorism, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's offer for cooperation on investigating the Pahalgam attack, US President Donald Trump's mediation in the current dispute and more dialogue.

Simla Agreement no longer holds significance owing to Indian actions: Asif

HUMA REHAN

ISLAMABAD: Defence Minister Khawaja Asif said on Thursday that the 1972 Simla Agreement between Pakistan and India no longer holds any significance owing to New Delhi's unilateral actions. "The [Simla] agreement was bilateral [...] as no third party or the World Bank was involved," Asif told Geo News, maintaining that the Line of Control (LoC) would convert into a ceasefire line in the absence of the bilateral treaty. The Simla Agreement was signed after the third war between the two countries in 1971 and lays down principles meant to govern bilateral relations, including respect for a ceasefire line in Kashmir. His statement came after New Delhi's announcement to unilaterally terminate the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) followed by unprovoked attacks inside Pakistan last month, which led to the military clashes between the two nuclear-armed neighbours.

The last month's military confrontation between the two countries was triggered by last month's attack in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IOJK) that left 26 tourists dead, with India blaming Pakistan for the attack without offering any evidence. Pakistan's armed forces had launched a large-scale retaliatory military action, named "Operation Bhanu-yun-Marsoos", and targeted several Indian military targets across multiple regions.



Mohammad Haris rockets up 210 spots in ICC T20I rankings; senior trio declines

PEAK POINT

DUBAI: Pakistan's resounding 3-0 T20I series win over Bangladesh has sparked major shifts in the latest ICC T20I rankings, with rising star Mohammad Haris making the most dramatic climb. Haris surged an extraordinary 210 places to reach 30th in the batting rankings with 580 rating points, after smashing the second-fastest T20I century by a Pakistani in the final match of the series. Middle-order batter Hasan Nawaz also made significant progress, rising 57 spots to 45th, while Saim Ayub moved up four places to 61st. Captain Salman Ali Agha, who contributed 90 runs across the series, climbed 42 positions to 75th. However, senior batters Babar Azam, Mohammad Rizwan, and Fakhar Zaman saw dips. Fakhar dropped 16 places to 87th, Babar slipped to 12th, overtaken by Rizwan who now holds 13th place. At the top, Australia's Travis Head retained the No. 1 batting spot, followed by India's Abhishek Sharma and England's Phil Salt. In bowling, Abbas Afridi climbed 18 places to 19th with 605 points after a strong bowling performance, while Shadab Khan and Abrar Ahmed both sit at 99th after big gains. Shaheen Afridi (36th), Haris Rauf (9th), Sufiyan Muqeem (83rd), and Naseem Shah (94th) all suffered ranking drops. New Zealand's Jacob Duffy, West Indies' Akeal Hosein, and India's Varun Chakaravarthy hold the top three positions in the bowling rankings.

Mike Hesson shares vision for Pakistan cricket in PCB podcast episode



MUHAMMAD USMAN

ISLAMABAD: The 62nd episode of the PCB Podcast has been released, featuring an in-depth interview with Pakistan men's white-ball head coach Mike Hesson, conducted by former Test cricketer and renowned commentator Bazid Khan. In the episode, Hesson delved into his coaching philosophy, discussed his decision to join Pakistan, and reflected on how his time with Islamabad United in the HBL Pakistan Super League helped him build familiarity with local players and team culture. The podcast was recorded following Pakistan's emphatic win in the first T20I against Bangladesh in Lahore, part of the team's eventual 3-0 series whitewash, that was also Hesson's first assignment since taking charge. Hesson also outlined his long-term vision for the Pakistan white-ball setup, emphasising team cohesion, adaptability, and performance consistency on the road to major tournaments.

Snooker player Babar seeks recognition from govt, Pakistan Sports Board

JAVED KHAN

ISLAMABAD: National snooker player Babar Masih on Wednesday urged the federal government and the Pakistan Sports Board (PSB) to acknowledge his achievements on the international stage, lamenting the lack of recognition and support extended to him despite a series of medals won for Pakistan. Addressing a press conference at the residence of former federal minister and minority rights activist J. Salik, Babar said he had represented Pakistan in multiple international snooker events, securing medals on numerous occasions, yet had been overlooked for rewards and official recognition. "I fail to understand why I have not received the attention or prize money that is usually awarded to athletes who bring honour to the country," he said, adding that he had recently defeated India's Pankaj Advani, a decorated player in the sport. "I have a long list of medals but have never been given any government recognition or financial reward," Babar claimed. He appealed to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, adviser to the PM on political and public affairs Rana Sanaullah Khan, and PSB Director General Yasir Pirzada to address his concerns and acknowledge his contributions. Babar stated that he had been crowned Asian champion three times (in team events), and world champion once (also in a team event), and had bagged four gold, seven silver, and seven bronze medals over



Cyclist completes 'first-ever' bike journey from Karachi to K2

ARIF MEHMOOD KHAN

GILGIT: Polish cyclist Pawel Malaszko, who started his 'K2 B.C Bike Expedition' from Karachi on April 4 to cycle across Pakistan from the shores of the Arabian Sea to K2 base camp, and completed his journey late last month, claims he is the first person to accomplish this feat.

The 46-year-old cyclist said he completed the 3,376-km journey in 95 days, bicycling 3,322km and trekking with his bike on his back for 54km. His journey included an elevation gain of 32,003 metres and temperatures ranging from 46°C to -18°C. However, a legal dispute over a permit fee hike between Gilgit-Baltistan tourism and tour operators temporarily halted his journey, preventing the issuance of the required permit. "When I was on the way, I was informed by my tour operator... that issuing trekking permits has been suspended by the GB tourism department," he said. After cycling over 2,000 kilometres to Gilgit, Mr Malaszko approached the GB Chief Court. He told the judges the expedition was "not only a personal dream but also an opportunity to promote Pakistan as a destination for adventure and exploration throughout Europe and beyond. I have invested significant effort and dedication into this endeavour, and your help would mean the world to me". A GB Chief



Court judge ordered the tourism department on May 3 to issue the permit at the previous rates, which it subsequently did. Following the court order, Mr Malaszko travelled to Khunjerab Pass via the Karakoram Highway and then to Skardu, covering 3,050 kilometres by May 7. He commenced the final stage from Skardu to K2 base camp on May 11. Reflecting on the journey, Mr Malaszko noted Pakistan's diverse cultures and climates. "From Karachi to Multan, I had 46

degrees of heat every day," he told the media persons. "At that stage, I had to drive at night and early in the morning to avoid having a sunstroke." He praised the local hospitality among people is very high and that they try to be helpful in every aspect. While he found most roads in good condition, he acknowledged the unique challenges of mountain routes. "No one can influence how the mountains

behave and whether they destroy the roads," he said. "It is not man's fault or negligence. That's the case with the mountains." The final 200-kilometre stretch from Skardu to K2 base camp was described as the "most technical and challenging," Malaszko explained. "On the way to K2 base camp, there are glaciers, a mountainous route, a steep hike; however, at some sections, I will put my bicycle on the back and travel myself."

PCB plans 40-player pool for red and white ball cricket after performance review

SEHRISH NAZ

LAHORE: Following a detailed performance review of national cricketers, the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) is finalising a strategic plan to create a player pool of 40 cricketers for both red-ball and white-ball formats. According to sources, the pool will serve as a bench strength for Pakistan's national teams and will also supply talent for Pakistan Shaheens and Pakistan Emerging teams. In the first phase, 22 players have been called up for assessment, with Head Coach Mike Hesson leading the evaluation alongside other coaching staff. Based on this report, the selected players will undergo focused training at the National Cricket Academy (NCA). The aim of the initiative is to ensure a continuous supply of match-ready backup players for all formats.

PSB announces Election Schedule for 3 Sports Federations

RIZWAN HADIER

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of the Pakistan Sports Board (PSB) has officially announced the schedule for the elections of three major sports federations. These elections will be held on June 20, 2025, at the PSB Coaching Centre located on Ferozepur Road in Lahore. However, the elections for each federation will be held at different times. According to the announced schedule, the elections for the Alpine Club of Pakistan will be held at 10am, followed by the Pakistan Bodybuilding Federation elections at 2:30pm, and the Pakistan Tenspin Bowling Federation elections at 4pm. The Election Commission has directed that all nomination papers, voter lists, and objections must be submitted by June 12 at the PSB headquarters in Islamabad. The scrutiny of nominations will also take place on June 12 from 10am to 1pm, and the provisional voter list and list of candidates will be issued the same day at 2:00 PM. The deadline for submitting objections is set for 10:00 AM on June 13, with decisions on those objections to be announced by 12:00 PM the same day. The final voter list and candidate list will be published at 3pm on June 13. The Election Commission has clarified that all proceedings on election day will be broadcast live, and no TA/DA (travel allowance/daily allowance) will be provided to any candidate or voter.



the course of his career. "While the Pakistan Billiards and Snooker Association (PBSA) supports official tours, promises are often not fulfilled, and private tours are completely ignored," he said. When contacted by Dawn, an official of the PBSA confirmed that Babar had won medals in team events but noted that he had yet to claim a major individual international title. "Nonetheless, he deserves recognition for his achievements," the official added. In response to Babar's remarks, DG PSB Yasir told Dawn that the Board's policies regarding rewards for athletes are publicly available. "If Mr Masih's accomplishments fall under the eligible categories, he is welcome to visit the PSB and present his case," he said. Separately, on Tuesday, PBSA chairman Alamgir A. Shaikh met Secretary of the Ministry of Inter-Provincial Coordination (IPC) Mohyuddin Ahmad Wani and Yasir. During the meeting, Alamgir requested the release of the federation's annual and special grants. According to a PBSA press release, the IPC secretary assured him that the matter would be presented at the next PSB meeting for consideration and approval. Alamgir also discussed several long-standing issues faced by the federation with the PSB chief.



ISLAMABAD: Minister for Railways, Mohammad Hanif Abbasi, met with the Italian Ambassador to Pakistan, Ms. Marinella Armellini, and discussed important matters.

Mechanized farming key to food security: Rana Tanveer

PEAK POINT
ISLAMABAD: Minister for National Food and Security, Rana Tanveer Hussain on Thursday held a detailed meeting with a delegation from the Pakistan Association of Automotive Parts and Accessories Manufacturers (PAAPAM). The meeting focused on strengthening agricultural mechanization in Pakistan by introducing a comprehensive National Tractor Policy to support

both local productivity and export potential. During the meeting, the delegation briefed the minister on the vital role the tractor manufacturing industry is playing in the national economy, contributing approximately USD 400 million annually. They emphasized that with the support of a national policy, this contribution could potentially be increased to USD 1 billion, creating opportunities for enhanced exports, local employment, and technology transfer. The delegation highlighted that the availability and affordability of modern and advanced-technology tractors were directly linked to improving the productivity of Pakistan's agricultural lands. Drones Given the Ministry's mandate to ensure food security, promote sustainable agriculture and enhance farmer prosperity, Minister Rana Tanveer Hussain acknowledged the importance of this proposal.

Pakistan reaffirms commitment to environmental protection on World Environment Day 2025

PEAK POINT
ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has joined the global community in commemorating World Environment Day on Thursday reaffirming its dedication to addressing pressing environmental challenges and contributing to international efforts aimed at protecting the planet. In a press release issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the government described the day as a "significant opportunity to raise awareness about the urgent environmental challenges facing the world" and

to "accelerate collective efforts" to address them. Pakistan, among the countries most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, expressed appreciation for ongoing global initiatives to confront the "triple planetary crises" of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution. The 2025 theme, "Beat Plastic Pollution," was lauded by the Ministry as both "timely and vital," given the increasing threat of plastic waste contaminating land, rivers, and oceans worldwide. The government emphasized that the theme



closely aligns with Pakistan's own national priorities. In a landmark move this April, the Government of Pakistan launched the National Action Roadmap to Reduce Plastic Pollution, a strategic framework aimed at minimizing plastic waste through improved waste management practices and promoting circularity in the use of materials. "Pakistan remains committed to playing its full part in addressing these critical environmental crises and in safeguarding our planet for future generations," the statement concluded.

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Karachi jailbreak

A THOROUGH audit of correctional facilities in Sindh — as well as other parts of the country — is in order after the recent jailbreak in Karachi's Malir District Prison. Over 200 inmates escaped from the facility after the city experienced slight tremors late Monday and early Tuesday. Prisoners were allowed into the jail's courtyard after the minor quakes and from there all hell broke loose, as the inmates overpowered the guards and made for the exits. As per news agencies, there were only 28 guards on duty to watch over 2,000 prisoners, while the jail's security cameras were also reportedly not functioning. At the time of writing, a significant number of escapees remained at large. As the Sindh chief minister said, the jailbreak represented a "complete breakdown in communication and preparedness". The Sindh government says the escaped prisoners were involved in "minor offences". The threat to public safety would have been considerably higher had these escapees included hard-core militants, or those involved in heinous crimes. The episode reveals that our penitentiaries are woefully underprepared for emergency situations. The jail staff should have been trained to safely evacuate prisoners in case of natural disasters or other emergencies, while also ensuring they remained under the watch of law enforcers. Instead, what was witnessed was panic and a state of total unpreparedness. The incident again underscores the need to speed up jail reforms countrywide.

Doval's doctrine in action

India's tactical defeat in the recent conflict hasn't prompted restraint. It's accelerated a dangerous descent. That a nuclear-armed state would respond to a military setback by doubling down on covert proxy warfare isn't a sign of strategy but of desperation. And nowhere is that desperation more visible than in Balochistan, where the decades-old Indian hand is now a matter of record. The link between India's RAW and the Balochistan Liberation Army has been well-established. But what's new — and demands a far more serious response — is the engineered alliance between the BLA and the TTP. These are ideologically incompatible groups with no organic reason to work together. Their operational merger makes sense only when understood as the product of a foreign intelligence apparatus acting with purpose — in this case, RAW. For years, Ajit Doval's doctrine of 'offensive defence' has been passed off as strategic brilliance in Indian circles. In reality, it's amounted to exporting terror to Pakistan and masking it as containment. Doval himself has been more than happy to explain it all to his YouTube audience — how India is engaging in hybrid warfare, how its reach extends into Pakistan's tribal belt, and how non-state actors are used as force multipliers. When such admissions come not from whistleblowers but senior security officials, there's no point pretending we're dealing with anything less than a state policy of sustained subversion. Yet for too long, Pakistan has hesitated to update the

rulebook. Even when arrests were made and confessions surfaced, the preferred response was caution and international diplomacy. Now that India's role in stoking unrest through the BLA-TTP nexus is undeniable, that playbook has run its course. India isn't just backing terror. It's building a parallel theatre of conflict that doesn't show up in ceasefire agreements or diplomatic overtures but bleeds Pakistan in slow motion. And after the embarrassment of a failed escalation, India has every incentive to let this theatre take centre-stage. The signs are already there. Cross-border terrorism has picked up. Sleeper cells are being activated in urban centres. Ethnic fault lines are once again being tested. The pattern is textbook asymmetric warfare, but the context is important: this isn't the behaviour of a rising regional power. It's the last gasp of a regional spoiler that thought military posturing would yield strategic depth, only to realise it was neither ready nor capable of sustaining it. The most troubling front in this campaign remains Balochistan. Unlike past cycles of violence, the new wave is far more calculated. It targets infrastructure, demoralises security personnel and aims to isolate the province both politically and economically. The agenda is no longer about Baloch grievances; it's about creating sustained instability that can be leveraged externally. What we're seeing is really remote-controlled sabotage. RAW's tactics in Balochistan are evolving. Recent operations have shown a marked increase in technical sophistication. Communication

channels are encrypted, funding routes are harder to trace and targeted disinformation campaigns now accompany kinetic attacks. This hybrid model mirrors patterns seen in other destabilisation theatres, from eastern Ukraine to parts of the Middle East, and should not be dismissed as improvisation. This is India's strategy. Meanwhile, international attention remains fleeting, driven more by geopolitical alignments than objective assessments. Western capitals that preach stability have shown little appetite for calling out India's double game. At best, they issue bland statements of concern. At worst, they reward India with defence deals and diplomatic cover. Pakistan must break this silence — and not with dossiers alone. Strategic engagement, evidence-based diplomacy and a calibrated media campaign must converge to challenge the narrative. What matters now is clarity of purpose. Pakistan's security establishment cannot afford to play defence indefinitely. The enemy has declared its strategy. It's time Pakistan declared its resolve. That means enhancing internal coherence, securing the information space, denying operational depth to proxies and building the regional alliances necessary to expose and isolate the architects of subversion. India's defeat on the battlefield should have marked a pause in hostilities. Instead, it has sharpened the covert edge of its foreign policy. The choice before Pakistan is clear: either let Balochistan be used as a permanent pressure point or expose the covert war for what it is — and act accordingly. Courtesy The News

Budgeting on sacrifice

WE are days away from the budget and its details are still being worked out. Here is some of what we know thus far. They are likely to announce an FBR revenue target around Rs14 trillion (maybe slightly higher). Current expenditures are supposed to stay just below Rs23tr, of which around Rs16tr are federal and the rest from the provinces. The underlying primary balance (deficit plus interest expenditures) must remain somewhere near Rs1.17tr. These numbers will be more or less fixed since they are part of the medium-term framework already worked out with the IMF and released in the last staff report. Whatever space will need to be made for shifting tax and expenditure priorities must be created in a way that does not change these numbers by too much. Now consider what they will have to do in the budget. First up, defence spending is supposed to increase by around 33.7 per cent, as per the same medium-term framework, which was drawn up before the recent conflict. We will see how much of an increase actually comes now that the resource requirements of the security forces have undoubtedly increased following the war. Usually the first place to see cuts is development spending. In the current year, for example, development spending was supposed to be less than Rs1tr as per the understanding with the IMF, but the government still announced a federal development programme spending target of Rs1.4tr in its budget last year. But until March, barely Rs909 billion had been spent, while the provinces raced ahead and have spent more than Rs1.2tr already. For next year they are trying to keep the federal development programme down to Rs1tr again. Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal has implored the provinces to cooperate with the centre and announce smaller development programmes for the next fiscal year. It is unlikely the provinces will oblige. And the federal government will have to starve its own plans, and its MNAs, in order to keep the fiscal equation more or less in control. Rarely have conditions been so favourable for a government to do something big and transformative. Courtesy Dawn

CM Bugti rules out launching major military operation in Balochistan



PEAK POINT

QUETTA: Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfaraz Bugti has said that India has initiated hatching new conspiracies through its proxies in the provinces aimed at unleashing a new wave of terrorism in Pakistan, particularly in Balochistan. Addressing a news conference in Quetta on Thursday with a focus on Fitna al-Hindustan, Chief Minister Sarfaraz Bugti recalled that India resorted to spreading fake news about Karachi Port in order to hurt Pakistan's economy. Responding to

a question, the chief minister ruled out launching a major military operation in Balochistan and said a major military operation in Balochistan is not necessary at this point. "However," he added, "targeted operations will continue whenever needed to ensure peace and security." CM Bugti said India is attempting to destabilise Pakistan once again by leveraging misinformation and targeting vulnerable groups, including children. He cited a recent disinformation campaign about the Karachi Port, which he

claimed was engineered to damage Pakistan's economy. However, he assured the nation that the Pakistan Navy successfully safeguarded the strategic coastal area. Bugti also addressed the issue of missing persons, stating that the matter has long been exploited as propaganda against the state. He stressed that the provincial government has worked on consensus-building, not just on the missing persons issue but also in areas like mining and mineral reforms. "Legislation on missing persons has already been carried out to institutionalise the matter," he added. Rejecting political reductionism, Bugti cautioned against viewing Balochistan only through the perspective of "two or four politicians." He emphasised the complexity and diversity of opinions within the province and noted that in a polarised political climate, expecting 100% consensus is unrealistic. The Chief Minister reaffirmed his administration's commitment to safeguarding the province while resisting foreign-backed destabilisation efforts. An audio tape of the terrorists of Fitna-ul-Hindustan's conversation was also played at the press conference of the Chief Minister of Balochistan.

Junaid Anwar calls for sustainable maritime practices to restore blue heart of planet

AYESHA REHAN

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chaudhry has urged urgent action to combat plastic pollution threatening Pakistan's coastal ecosystems and marine biodiversity. In his World Environment Day message, he emphasized aligning maritime policies with global climate goals to ensure cleaner oceans and greener coasts. The Ministry has planted millions of mangrove saplings to restore coastal biodiversity and mitigate pollution. Highlighting this year's theme, "Beat Plastic Pollution," Minister Chaudhry called for sustainable solutions to protect Pakistan's over 1,000 km coastline, which supports ports, fishing communities, and coastal towns but is increasingly endangered by plastic waste. He stressed the need to transition from a linear "take-make-dispose" economy to a circular model emphasizing reuse, recycling, and sustainable alternatives.

The Minister said the Ministry is collaborating with stakeholders to enforce waste regulations at ports and on vessels to prevent marine pollution. Mangrove restoration remains a key focus, as these forests act as natural coastal protectors, nurseries for marine life, and filters for pollutants. "Pakistan's Indus Delta hosts one of the world's largest mangrove ecosystems, with ongoing efforts involving local communities and international partners", he added. Minister Chaudhry called on industries, civil society, academia, and citizens to join the fight against plastic pollution, underscoring that lasting solutions require both policy and daily commitment. He concluded: "Let this World Environment Day be a turning point—a pledge that we, as a nation, will not only protect but also restore the blue heart of our planet. Together, we can chart a course toward cleaner oceans, greener coastlines, and a sustainable future."



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs, Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chaudhry posing for group photo with senior management from shipping lines and terminal operators headed by Asim A. Siddiqui, Managing Director of Pakistan International Limited.

Chairman Senate, British High Commissioner discuss bilateral ties

ARSHAD MALIK

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani and British High Commissioner to Pakistan Jane Marriott on Thursday discussed bilateral parliamentary and diplomatic relations, as well as regional and global developments and matters of mutual interest. Drones Chairman Senate during a meeting said that Pakistan greatly values its long-standing, close, and enduring relationship with the United Kingdom, built on shared history, values, and traditions. Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani noted that bilateral cooperation

between Pakistan and the UK continues to strengthen across multiple sectors, and Pakistan remains committed to further expanding these ties. He emphasised the vital role of the British Pakistani community—over 1.7 million strong—in promoting robust social, cultural, and economic linkages. He added that Pakistan aspires to elevate its comprehensive partnership with the UK to an Enhanced Strategic Partnership. Gilani underscored the importance of regional peace and stability. He appreciated the UK's constructive efforts in promoting peace in South Asia, especially its role in

addressing tensions between Pakistan and India. "I am a man of peace and strongly believe that prosperity cannot be achieved without peace," he said. He noted that both Pakistan and the UK are committed to combating terrorism, extremism, and organised crime. Highlighting Pakistan's

Rail & road access to Central Asia, game changer: Aleem Khan

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Communications Abdul Aleem Khan has observed that access to Central Asian countries, Europe & Russia through rail and road connectivity is a game changer. He emphasized that improving communication infrastructure is a key priority to achieve economic growth and meaningful discussions are underway with various countries in this regard. He expressed these views during a meeting with the Ambassador of Kazakhstan Yerzhan Kistafin who called on him here on Thursday, said a press release. The meeting included an in-depth discussion on matters of mutual interest, bilateral cooperation and the outcomes of the recent Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) summit. Abdul Aleem Khan highlighted that strengthened partnerships between major South Asian Countries will yield positive results. He reiterated Pakistan's commitment to playing a proactive role on all international platforms and expressed optimism about a brighter economic and financial outlook for the country in the coming days.

Govt. achieves Rs4 trn national development outlay three years ahead of schedule: Ahsan Iqbal

JAVED KHAN

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal on Thursday said the incumbent government had achieved a significant milestone by preparing a Rs4 trillion national development outlay for the fiscal year 2025-26, in just the second year of its five-year term, a target originally scheduled for 2028-29. Speaking to the media at the launch of the Monthly Development Plan, he credited improved governance, enhanced provincial coordination, and robust tax collection as key drivers behind the country's early achievement of major development targets. He praised the government's fiscal management, particularly in tax collection, saying "The government has increased tax collection by 29 percent. This increase has directly contributed to higher

provincial incomes and enabled us to enhance our national development outlay." Although, he said, federal development spending had slightly decreased, the rise in provincial budgets, driven by increased fiscal transfers, had more than compensated. "The overall national development outlay has not decreased; rather, it has significantly increased compared to last year," he added. The minister reaffirmed confidence in achieving a 4.2 percent GDP growth rate this year, projecting a climb to 6 percent by the final year of the current five-year plan.



Belarus seeks to strengthen air force cooperation with Pakistan

MOHSIN ALI

ISLAMABAD: A high-level defence delegation from Belarus visited the Air Headquarters in Islamabad, said the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) on Thursday. The delegation was led by Major General Andrei Yevgenyevich Lukanovich, Commander of the Belarusian Air Force and Air Defence. Upon arrival, the distinguished guest was presented with a guard of honour by a smartly turned-out contingent of the Pakistan Air Force (PAF). During the meeting, both sides held detailed discussions on military and air force cooperation, reaffirming their commitment to further strengthening longstanding bilateral ties. ISPR reported that both parties agreed to maintain close and continuous communication between their respective air



forces. The Chief of Air Staff highlighted the strong military relations between the two nations. The Air Chief stated that the PAF would continue to provide full support to enhance the capabilities of the Belarusian Air Force. Major General Lukanovich expressed gratitude for the warm hospitality and showed deep interest in learning from the PAF's combat experience. He also praised the professionalism and operational effectiveness of the Pakistan Air Force.

Significant Achievements of Bannu Region Police against Criminal Elements in May 2025

UMER DIAZ KHAN

BANNU: Significant Achievements of Bannu Region Police against Criminal Elements in May 2025 Under the directives of the Inspector General of Police Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Zulfikar Hameed and under the supervision of Regional Police Officer Bannu Sajjad Khan the conducted extensive operations during May 2025 to maintain law and order eliminate crime and curb narcotics and illegal arms. The notable achievements from these operations are as follows Proclaimed offenders arrested 324 Drug dealers arrested 122 Preventive actions carried out 1,311 Actions against aerial firing 331 Search and strike operations 101 Recovered Arms and Ammunition Kalashnikov rifles 80 Kalakol rifles 21 Shotgun 15



Repeaters 60 Pistols 463 Cartridges 9,209 Recovered Narcotics: hashish 171,322 kg crystal meth 54,99 kg Heroin 6,903 kg Alcohol 26 liters All these operations were carried out with the commitment to protect lives and property, establish social peace, and uphold the rule of law. Regional Police Officer Bannu, Sajjad Khan, reaffirmed the commitment that actions against criminal elements will continue with the same spirit and consistency. No leniency will be shown towards criminals.

concerns over cross-border terrorism emanating from Afghanistan, he urged the UK to support regional security cooperation and counter-terrorism measures to address these threats effectively. Gilani reiterated Pakistan's desire for peace in the Afghan refugee camps, adding that the need for the peaceful resolution of long-standing disputes, particularly the Jammu and Kashmir issue, in accordance with relevant United Nations resolutions. Drones He also called for measures to address cross-border infiltration from Afghanistan and affirmed Pakistan's willingness to

collaborate with the UK on achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), safeguarding international law, and enhancing regional stability. He further highlighted Pakistan's longstanding humanitarian contribution in hosting over 3 million Afghan refugees for decades, adding that thousands still reside in the country. He urged the global community to step forward and play a meaningful role in resolving the Afghan refugee crisis. Chairman Senate noted that Pakistan is among the countries most severely impacted by climate change and emphasised the need for global cooperation to

