



Sajal Aly's photos with newborn baby go viral

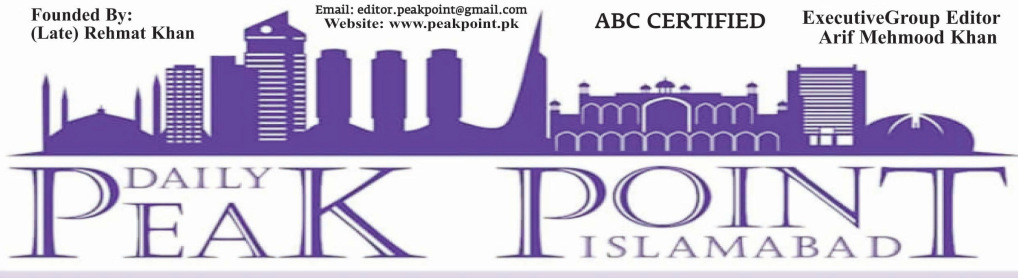
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ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting regarding reforms in the maritime sector.

Maritime, energy sectors' reforms to boost trade, unlock Pakistan's potential: PM

ARIF MEHMOOD KHAN

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Monday said that the reforms in maritime and energy sectors would boost trade, reduce costs, and unlock Pakistan's economic potential.

The prime minister, chairing a high-level meeting to review progress on the government's wide-ranging reforms in the maritime sector, emphasized that comprehensive efforts were underway to transform Pakistan's port infrastructure, streamline customs operations, and strengthen the country's maritime economy for long-term national benefit.

He hailed the task force on maritime reforms for its diligent

work and praised their efforts in preparing a comprehensive set of recommendations that aim to end decades-long stagnation in the sector.

"Pakistan has been blessed with a long coastline and vast maritime resources. With the right reforms, we can unlock immense economic potential and bring our ports to global competitive standards," Prime Minister Shehbaz said.

He noted that reduction in electricity tariff of almost Rs. 7.5 per unit was a direct result of the focused work of a dedicated task force on reforms in energy sector.

He emphasized that the same results-driven model was now being applied to the maritime sector.

"This electricity tariff reduction is a major

relief not only for households but also for all sectors like agriculture, commerce, trade, and industry. It will bring down the cost of production, improve local manufacturing, generate employment, and enhance exports," he stated.

He said that structural reforms remained central to the government's economic strategy, which had already stabilized Pakistan's macroeconomic indicators.

The prime minister also highlighted the opportunity presented by the recent drop in global oil prices, and assured that the government was working to harness its long-term benefits for Pakistan's economy.

The meeting reviewed a detailed presentation on the

roadmap for maritime sector reforms.

The participants of the meeting were briefed on introduction of the Pakistan Maritime Port Act, unifying regulations across all ports, creation of a national dredging plan, including the formation of a National Dredging Company to serve ports across the country.

The forum also discussed modernization of the Pakistan National Shipping Corporation (PNSC) with a 25-year rehabilitation plan and inclusion of the private sector through public-private partnerships. It was informed that a hazardous waste disposal plant was set up in Gadani to manage chemical and industrial waste.

The prime minister instructed the authori-

ties concerned to accelerate installation of modern scanning systems at all ports, and expedite customs clearance procedures, particularly in red and yellow channels.

He also directed that a plan be developed to quickly auction long-held containers to free up port space and improve efficiency.

The taskforce also briefed on conducting financial, HR, and performance audits at national ports, enhancing training and human resource development at Karachi Port Trust, and reviewing trade tariffs to boost the competitiveness of Pakistani ports.

The prime minister acknowledged the dedication of the maritime task force and other stakeholders involved in crafting the reform agenda.

He reaffirmed that maritime resources were key to global trade and Pakistan's economic future, adding that timely action was essential to remain competitive in an evolving global market.

The meeting was attended by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Muhammad Ishaq Dar, Chief of Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir, federal ministers Khawaja Muhammad Asif, Ahsan Iqbal, Azam Nazir Tarar, Ahmad Khan Cheema, Junaid Anwar, Advisor to the PM Syed Tauqeer Shah, the Governor of the State Bank, and other senior officials from relevant ministries and institutions.

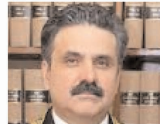
Don't want to interfere in jurisdiction of high court: Chief Justice Yahya Afridi

HUMA REHAN

ISLAMABAD: Chief Justice Yahya Afridi on Monday upheld the Rs2.2 million fine imposed on the prosecutor general of Punjab by the Lahore High Court (LHC) while disposing of appeals regarding the transfer of cases from the Rawalpindi ATC judge in the case related to May 9 mayhem.

The CJP observed that the high court's decision would not affect the future, adding that the high court and the ATC (anti-terrorism court) judge. The counsel for the Punjab government stated that the judge had already been transferred, and the issue is regarding the high court's remarks and the fine.

Chief Justice Afridi mentioned that the chief justice of the high court has to manage the entire province and had to send a message to the government regarding the refer-



Chief Justice Afridi

ence against the judge. The CJP said that the LHC had sent a message to the government, which was also agreed upon by the administrative judge. The Supreme Court does not wish to interfere in the jurisdiction of the high court, and paying the fine is not a major issue.

A three-member bench headed by the Chief Justice of Pakistan is hearing the Punjab government's petitions seeking cancellation of bail granted to the May 9 incidents accused. Other members of the bench are Justice Musarrat Hlali and Justice Miangul Hassan Aurangzeb.

KP faces serious challenges of terrorism, governance gap, economic crisis: Governor Kundi

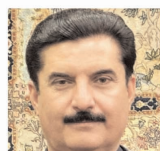
JAVED KHAN

ISLAMABAD: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faisal Karim Kundi, on Monday said that the province is currently facing serious challenges, including terrorism, governance vacuum, and economic downturn.

He also pointed out that corruption and the lack of political ownership are major contributors to the province's ongoing issues. The transparent use of funds is essential to improve the standard of governance in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, he stressed.

He expressed these views while addressing the opening session of a seminar titled "Security and Governance Challenges in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa" organized by the Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI).

In his address, Governor Kundi said that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has long been affected by terrorism. Although the security forces have made tremendous sacrifices to restore peace, the threats



have not been entirely eliminated.

He highlighted that even after the merger of FATA, the newly merged districts continue to face governance gaps, cross-border criminal activities, corruption, and political marginalization.

He emphasized the urgent need for effective management in border areas, inter-institutional coordination, and sustainable policy-making to root out terrorism and crime. The Governor expressed deep concern over the mismanagement of public funds, inter-institutional coordination, and sustainable policy-making to root out terrorism and crime. The Governor expressed deep concern over the mismanagement of public funds, inter-institutional coordination, and sustainable policy-making to root out terrorism and crime. The Governor expressed deep concern over the mismanagement of public funds, inter-institutional coordination, and sustainable policy-making to root out terrorism and crime.

PTI's Shibli Faraz terms cut in power tariff eyewash

KOMAL BUTT

ISLAMABAD: Senior PTI leader Shibli Faraz said on Monday that a cut in the electricity prices announced by the government was a futile attempt to give the impression that all is well in the country.

Speaking to reporters in Islamabad, he said that the party would raise the issue in the parliament and expose the government. "We are working on it," he informed.

Regarding the Judicial Complex attack case, he said everybody knew this was fabricated to victimize the political opponents of the government.

He further said that former prime minister and PTI founder Imran Khan would only be released from jail once the government realized that the country had to move forward.

"We have to develop the country. We have to keep this country united," Shibli said, and added, "We have to leave a prosperous Pakistan for our coming generations."

Ring leader among 9 terrorists killed in DIK: ISPR

SAMRA ATHAR

RAWALPINDI: Security forces killed nine terrorists during an intelligence-based operation (IBO) in the Takwara area of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Dera Ismail Khan district, the military's media wing said on Monday.

Pakistan has witnessed an uptick in terror activities over the past year, especially in KP and Balochistan, after the proscribed Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) ended its ceasefire with the government in November 2022.

According to the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), security personnel carried out the IBO on the night of April 6-7 on the reported presence of khawarij.

Ftina Al Khawarij is a term the state uses to refer to the banned TTP. The statement said, "During [the] conduct of the operation, [our] own troops effectively engaged the khawarij location and after an intense fire exchange, nine khawarij including HVT [high-value target], kharij ring leader Shireen were sent to hell."



The forces also recovered weapons and ammunition from the terrorists, it added. The statement further said that the terrorist leader was wanted by law enforcement agencies "due to his involvement in numerous terrorist activities and being involved in target killing of numerous innocent civilians".

He was also responsible for the martyrdom of Captain Hasmain Akhtar on March 20, the statement added. The ISPR said, "Today's operation has avenged the heinous act and has brought the main perpetrator to justice."

The statement further read that a "sanitisation operation" was being conducted to eliminate any other terrorists in the area, adding, "[The] security forces in Pakistan are determined to wipe out the menace of terrorism from the country." A day earlier, security forces killed eight terrorists and injured another four as they thwarted an infiltration attempt on the Pakistan-Afghanistan border in North Waziristan. Last month, the government had ruled out a fresh military operation amid a surge in terrorist attacks, especially in KP and Balochistan. Militant violence and security operations intensified in the country in March, with the number of militant attacks surpassing 100 for the first

ECO secretary-general pay three-day visit to Pakistan from today

AVESHA REHAN

ISLAMABAD: Secretary-General of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), Dr. Asad Majeed Khan is scheduled to pay an official visit to Pakistan from April 8-10, 2025. During the visit, the secretary-general will call on Pakistan's leadership, including President Asif Ali Zardari, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, and other federal ministers.

In the meetings, the secretary general will present ECO's initiatives and his reform agenda aimed at revitalizing the Organization and strengthening ECO's relations with member states as well as Pakistan to expand regional cooperation and development.

Later, Dr. Khan will visit Lahore, where he will join the Permanent Representatives of ECO member states for the 29th Meeting of the ECO Council of Permanent Representatives, being held in there from April 12-15, 2025.

NACTA approves National Intelligence Fusion and Threat Assessment Centre

ARSHAD MALIK

ISLAMABAD: A major decision was made under the chairmanship of Prime Minister/Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi during a meeting of the NACTA Board of Governors, approving the establishment of the National Intelligence Fusion and Threat Assessment Centre (NIFTAC) under NACTA to comprehensively counter terrorism.

Minister of State for Interior Talal Chaudhry also attended the meeting, while NACTA's National Coordinator, Dr. Khalid Chauhan, briefed the board members on the new initiative.

Addressing the meeting, Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi stated that the establishment of this

centre was finalised after detailed consultation, and it will play a pivotal role in achieving the core objectives of NACTA.

He further announced that NIFTAC centres would be established in all provincial capitals to ensure a coordinated national response against terrorism.

He added that the NIFTAC initiative will help ensure the full implementation of the National Action Plan (NAP), which remains a cornerstone of Pakistan's counterterrorism strategy.

Minister of State Talal Chaudhry said that NIFTAC will play an effective role in enhancing NACTA's operational capacity and its ability to proactively counter emerging threats.



Politics should not be mixed with sports: Attaullah Tarar

ARIF MEHMOOD KHAN

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar on Monday underlined the need to keep politics separate from sports for the betterment of both the fields, highlighting the government's commitment to youth development and sports promotion nationwide.

"Politics should be kept out of sports and sports out of politics; this is better for both the sports and politics," the minister said while speaking as the chief guest on the occasion of a friendly cricket match between the Rawalpindi-Islamabad Sports Journalists Association (RISJA) XI and a UK Media team at the National Cricket Ground here.

Congratulating the match organizers, Tarar welcomed such initiatives, noting that increased sports activities foster positive societal attitudes. "Healthy activities are crucial to promote games, cricket, and sportsman spirit," he added.

The minister highlighted the government's extensive efforts in sports promotion, calling it a "top priority" to encourage positive engagement among young people.

He noted the continuity of youth-centric programs during the tenures of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) tenures, saying "the Prime Minister's Youth Program, started during the era of PML-N Quaid Nawaz Sharif, is being carried forward by Prime Minister Shehbaz



Sharif."

Tarar said the Talent Hunt Program, initiated during the previous PML-N government, continued to receive support. He urged collaboration between political parties, the private sector, and the public sector to enhance talent discovery for sports advancement.

Highlighting recent successes, he cited javelin thrower Arshad Nadeem, who made his mark globally, as an example of talent emerging from initiatives like the Youth Festival.

"We have abundant talent," Tarar said, adding that more talent hunt programs and youth festivals will be organized to discover athletes like Nadeem and help sports like hockey regain their lost status.

To a query, he said planning for an international-standard cricket stadium in Islamabad is underway.

Tarar also spoke on the revival of departmental sports, noting their importance in nurturing talent. In the past, the discontinuation of departmental sports left many players unemployed, he recalled.

"When our hockey

team returned after an impressive performance in the Asia Cup, the Prime Minister restarted this system," the minister noted.

He added that instructions were given to ensure the system benefits past players as well, recognizing that departmental sports produced great players.

As regards the Pakistan Television (PTV), the minister said the national TV cricket team selection was purely based on merit, mentioning Shamyul Hussain's outstanding performance. "For the first time, no 'parchi' (chit) was used for inclusion in the team."

He also noted that PTV's financial condition is better than many private channels and that the state broadcaster had

aired the Champions Trophy and World Cup live.

Tarar said the Pakistan Super League (PSL) brings global players to the country, offering the nation a chance to watch exciting and competitive cricket.

He expressed confidence that the PSL would be a victory for Pakistan and cricket.

Responding to a query about the national team's performance, the minister acknowledged that wins and losses are part of sports.

"The Pakistan cricket team possesses a lot of talent," asking the nation to remain hopeful for improvement as the Pakistan cricket team has achieved great feats in the past.

Hassan Ali urges players to rekindle fans' passion via PSL performance

MUHAMMAD USMAN

ISLAMABAD: Karachi Kings pacer Hassan Ali has admitted that the national team's performance left Pakistani cricket fans disappointed, however, he hoped that the upcoming Pakistan Super League (PSL) would help reigniting the cricket fever in the country.

Speaking to reporters before Karachi Kings' first practice session ahead of the 10th edition of the PSL, Hassan acknowledged that while Pakistan's recent results have been disappointing, the team's new players need time to settle.

"When the national team doesn't perform well, it impacts franchise leagues like the PSL," Hassan said. "But when Pakistan do well, the PSL's graph also rises."

Pakistan have struggled in recent months, including a poor showing at the ICC Champions Trophy at home ground and during the tour of



New Zealand.

However, Hassan backed the new players, saying: "The current results aren't great, but we have fresh faces in the team and also in management who need time. The players know where they went wrong and where to improve."

The experienced pacer emphasized that senior players must perform in the upcoming tournament to reignite fans' passion. "Our people love cricket, and the fans are very emotional. We will try our best to make them happy with our performances." This year's PSL

clashes with the Indian Premier League (IPL), but Hassan remained optimistic, saying: "Fans watch the tournament where there's good cricket with entertainment. If we play well in the PSL, viewers will leave the IPL to watch us." He highlighted the league's role in nurturing young talent, calling it a "big platform" for emerging players to share dressing rooms with top stars. "Performing in the PSL grabs the attention of selectors and management — there's no doubt about that."

Hassan, who had a strong comeback in domestic cricket earlier, vowed to maintain his form. "I recently performed well in the National T20 Cup and will try to keep that momentum. This PSL is important for me as I aim to make a comeback to the national team and as Karachi Kings team, we will do our best to bring Karachi cricket fans back to the stadium."

PSL 10 trophy unveiled in Quetta amid fanfare

PEAK POINT

QUETTA: The Pakistan Super League (PSL) Season 10 trophy arrived in Quetta on Sunday to a warm and festive welcome by cricket enthusiasts from across the city.

The trophy was brought from Quetta International Airport and escorted to the city centre, where fans showered rose petals on it and posed for selfies alongside officials.

An official unveiling ceremony was held in front of the Balochistan Assembly, attended by international cricketer from the province Haseebullah Khan, Quetta Assistant Commissioner Mazam Anjum and representatives from the



Balochistan Sports Department. Speaking to the media, the officials expressed their delight at the enthusiastic turnout and described it as a reflection of Balochistan's enduring passion for cricket and sports in general.

Dutch sports icons to visit Pakistan in celebration of 'International Day of Sport for Development and Peace'

KOMAL BUTT

ISLAMABAD: The Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Pakistan is delighted to announce the upcoming visit of two renowned Dutch sports personalities, Floris Jan Bovelander and Kayanat Bokhari, to Pakistan at the end of April 2025.

This visit coincides with the International Day of Sport for Development and Peace (IDSPP), observed annually on April 6th, which highlights the transformative power of sports in promoting peace and development, and inclusion.

Floris Jan Bovelander, a legendary hockey player and Olympian, is celebrated for his exceptional penalty corner skills. As a key player in the



Netherlands team that defeated Pakistan in the 1990 Hockey World Cup final in Lahore, Bovelander's visit will celebrate the shared passion for hockey and the historic ties between the two nations. His presence is expected to inspire young athletes to pursue excellence in sports.

Kayanat Bokhari, a Dutch-Pakistani footballer who represents Pakistan at the international level, will join Bovelander on this visit. As a passionate advocate for women's football, Bokhari aims to showcase Pakistan's talent on the global stage and highlight the role of sports in empowering women and promoting inclusivity.

During their visit, both sports icons will engage with local com-

munities, youth, athletes, and organizations to share their experiences and emphasize the unifying power of sports. This initiative aligns with this year's IDSPP theme, "Leveling the Playing Field: Sport for Social Inclusion," which underscores the potential of sports to bridge cultural divides and promote social cohesion.

The Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Islamabad invites all stakeholders to join this celebration of sports diplomacy and looks forward to welcoming Bovelander and Bokhari later this month. For further details about the visit or media inquiries, please contact the Embassy.

Home dept requests army for security of Women's Cricket World Cup qualifier, PSL 10

RIZWAN HAIDER

ISLAMABAD: The Punjab Home Department on Monday requested services of the Army and Rangers for security during two major upcoming events, the ICC Women's Cricket World Cup Qualifier and Pakistan Super League (PSL) Edition 10. According to the Punjab Home Department spokesperson, for the ICC Women's Cricket World Cup Qualifier which was scheduled in Lahore, one wing of Rangers and two companies of the Army will provide security. Six teams, including Pakistan, Bangladesh, Scotland, Ireland, West Indies and Thailand, will compete in the tournament which will continue



till April 20. Similarly, for the PSL Edition 10 which will take place from April 11 to May 18 in Lahore, Rawalpindi and Multan, the Punjab Home Department has requested one wing of Rangers and two companies of the Army for each city. Additionally, the Special Services Group (SSG) commandos and Army aviation helicopters will be deployed. With both events involving high-profile international participants and dignitaries, the security teams will ensure complete safety for players, officials and attendees. The Punjab Home Department has formally submitted the request to the Federal Ministry of Interior for the deployment of the security forces.

Young tennis talents compete in Pakistan's Memorial Tournament

SAMRA ATHAR

ISLAMABAD: The International Tennis Federation (ITF) Pakistan Zainab Ali Naqvi Memorial World Juniors Tennis Championship kicked off on Monday at the Pakistan Tennis Federation (PTF) Complex, featuring promising young athletes from 14 countries. According to a press released issued PTF, the tournament, honoring the memory of Zainab Ali Naqvi, a young tennis player who tragically passed away last year, has drawn 38 boys and 21 girls from across the globe. PTF President Aisam-ul-Haq Qureshi officially opened the championship, personally welcoming international partici-



pants and wishing them success. In the first-round matches, five Pakistani boys and one girl advanced to the second round.

Notable local performers included Mikaeel Ali Baig who defeated China's Yuxuan Li and Soha Ali who won a challenging three-set match against Kazakhstan's Zhaniya. The tournament represents a significant opportunity for junior tennis players to showcase their skills on an international stage, with participants representing diverse countries including Kazakhstan, Singapore, Turkey, Japan and China.

Play continues Tuesday at 10:00 a.m. with spectators and tennis enthusiasts eagerly anticipating the upcoming matches.

HBL PSL set to introduce full Urdu commentary for first time

SEHRISH NAZ

LAHORE: For the first time in HBL Pakistan Super League (PSL) history, fans will be able to enjoy full-match Urdu commentary throughout the tournament.

HBL PSL X will take place from 11 April to 18 May across Lahore, Karachi, Multan, West Punjab and Rawalpindi. This new Urdu commentary option would allow fans to experience every moment of the action in Pakistan's national language, aiming to deepen engagement and make the league more inclu-



sive. HBL PSL CEO Salman Naseer called it a "landmark moment," saying, "This is a landmark moment for the HBL PSL and its ever-growing fanbase. Cricket is a unifying force in Pakistan and by offering commentary in Urdu for a full game, we are bringing the excitement and energy of the HBL PSL closer to the hearts of fans in every corner of the country." "The introduction of the separate Urdu commentary feed is something that has been eagerly anticipated and we are excited to deliver it."



RAWALPINDI: A view congratulating commercial displayed on the electric screens on street light poles in the city regarding Curtailment in power tariff.

OIC-COMSTECH, PIEAS sign MoU to strengthen scientific and technological collaboration

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: The OIC Ministerial Standing Committee on Scientific and Technological Cooperation (COMSTECH) and the Pakistan Institute of Engineering and Applied Sciences (PIEAS) have signed a landmark Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) aimed at fostering collaboration in science, technology, and innovation across OIC member states.

Rector of PIEAS, during a ceremony attended by senior officials and representatives from both institutions. Under the partnership, COMSTECH and PIEAS will jointly launch educational and scientific programs, organize international conferences, workshops, and training sessions, and facilitate faculty and student exchange programs.

is the launch of the Jabir Bin Hayyan Scholarship Program, which will enable students from OIC countries to pursue undergraduate, postgraduate, PhD, and post-doctoral studies at PIEAS. The scholarship covers a range of disciplines including computer science, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, engineering, medical physics, nuclear medicine, and other cutting-edge fields.

enabling leading academics to contribute through lectures, research collaborations, and training activities. The MoU also includes provisions for short-term fellowships, facilitating international academic exchanges and sabbaticals, with accommodation provided by PIEAS.

The agreement seeks to enhance joint research, capacity building, and knowledge exchange, marking a pivotal step toward promoting scientific excellence within the Islamic world. The MoU was formally signed by Prof. Dr M Iqbal Choudhary, Coordinator General of COMSTECH, and Dr Naseem Irfan,

As part of this collaboration, PIEAS will become an Associate Member of the COMSTECH Consortium of Excellence (COE) and register with the OIC Technology and Innovation Portal—expanding its integration within the global scientific community of OIC nations.

COMSTECH will act as an outreach partner, directing international students to academic opportunities at PIEAS, while the university will retain authority over admissions and scholarship selection. Additionally, PIEAS will host scholars under the COMSTECH Distinguished Scholars Program,

This strategic partnership underscores the shared commitment of COMSTECH and PIEAS to drive innovation, scientific development, and knowledge-sharing across OIC member states. The MoU reflects a broader vision to harness science and technology as catalysts for socio-economic progress in the Islamic world.

Wildfire in Margalla Hills brought under control after joint effort: CDA

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: A sudden wildfire that broke out in the Lohi Dandi and Rumlal areas of Margalla Hills National Park was successfully contained after a coordinated response by authorities and local volunteers.

Muhammad Ali Randhawa credited the timely intervention of the Environment Wing, district administration, and volunteers for limiting the fire's impact. Drones and advanced technology were deployed to monitor and combat the blaze, while a control room remained active to oversee operations.

determine the cause of the fire. With summer approaching, the CDA has increased surveillance in the Margalla Hills using advanced machinery and round-the-clock patrols. The chairman urged citizens to avoid activities that could trigger fires, such as littering or burning debris, and to report emergencies to the helpline at 1122. Praising the efforts of all involved, Randhawa emphasised that the Margalla Hills are a vital part of Islamabad's identity and ecosystem.

Despite difficult terrain, over 51 firefighters and Capital Development Authority (CDA) personnel worked tirelessly to prevent the flames from spreading further, said authority spokesperson. CDA Chairman

SSP investigation visits checkpoints to review security arrangements

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Investigation Muhammad Usman Tariq Butt reviewed the security arrangements late at night at various checkpoints across the city to ensure the safety of citizens and the implementation of effective law and order measures.

An official told APP that the SSP visited several duty points, met with the officers deployed there, and commended them for their dedicated service. Senior police officers were also present during the visit. SSP Butt said that the Islamabad Police have made special security arrangements across the district to maintain peace and prevent any

untoward incidents. SSP Butt said police officers remain fully engaged in safeguarding citizens and are utilizing all available resources to ensure law and order in the federal capital. He said no elements will be allowed to disturb the peace of the citizens, and the force remains alert and committed to its responsibilities.

NPO to organize webinar on "Lean Manufacturing"

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: The National Productivity Organization (NPO) is going to organize a webinar titled "Lean Manufacturing" on April 10 (Thursday). Lean manufacturing is a systematic approach

aimed at eliminating waste, improving efficiency, and maximizing value in production, according to an NPO document issued here. The workshop provides information about an introduction to lean and its principles, types of waste, lean tools and

techniques, Standard work and continuous improvement, and lean implementation in manufacturing. It also highlights core lean principles and tools to streamline operations, reduce costs, and enhance productivity.

Opinion & Editorial

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Attacking health

US President Donald Trump is all set to shake the world order. In January, right after assuming office, Trump announced that the US would withdraw from the World Health Organisation (WHO); the US is the WHO's largest financial contributor, providing around 18 per cent of its funding. He accused the WHO of mishandling the Covid-19 pandemic and other global health crises, failing to act independently, and requiring unfairly large financial contributions from the US compared to other nations like China. This arbitrary decision, taken just because Trump could, has rattled the healthcare sectors across the globe. Trump has been famous for his impulsive decisions, which he announces with pride and smugly tries to berate nations dependent on the US for their funding needs. He conveniently misses that US funding is not hand-outs doled out to nations but that it stems from the developed world's responsibility towards poor and developing regions the same countries that have been looted and plundered by the world's elite. Now, according to an internal memo seen last month by a foreign news outlet, the WHO is planning to cut its budget by just over one-fifth (21 per cent) for 2026-27, reducing it from \$5.3 billion to \$4.2 billion — a consequence of the US's withdrawal from the organisation. People who have a firmer grip on reality will see how the WHO has caused damage. The Covid-19 pandemic itself is an example of how collective action can help the world fight life-threatening viruses. The near-wipeout of the polio virus is another example of the strength of world unity. In the case of Covid, Trump may need to improve his memory. A Congressional report in 2021 concluded that the Trump Administration intentionally undermined the US response to the pandemic for political gain.

Ramazan and revenue

Usama Abdul Rauf
Ramazan, a month of profound spiritual reflection and devotion, also emerges as a period of significant economic activity in Pakistan. For Muslims worldwide, Ramazan offers a chance to strengthen their faith. For Pakistan's economy, it also becomes an unparalleled opportunity to stimulate various sectors and uplift countless livelihoods. The holy month, culminating in the joyous occasion of Eidul Fitr, sparks a surge in consumer spending, charitable giving, and communal celebrations — all of which leave a substantial economic footprint. During Ramazan, acts of charity multiply as Muslims fulfill their religious obligation to assist the less fortunate. One key avenue is Zakat, an obligatory form of almsgiving that requires Muslims to contribute 2.5 per cent of their wealth to those in need. In Pakistan, where an estimated \$5 billion is disbursed annually through Zakat, this practice plays a pivotal role in reducing poverty and providing a safety net for the underprivileged. Fitrana, a mandatory donation made before Eidul Fitr to ensure that the less fortunate can partake in the festivities, also contributes significantly to economic redistribution. According to Islamic Relief, millions of dollars are channeled into communities each year via Fitrana, empowering low-income households and enhancing their purchasing power. Ramazan also ignites a boom in food-related industries, driven by an increase in consumption patterns during Sehri and Iftar meals. Markets brim with activity as people stock up on staples like wheat flour and gram flour. According to data from the PBS, the sale of these commodities rises by nearly 30 per cent during Ramazan. Similarly, the demand for such items such as dates, essential for breaking the fast, soars by approximately 40 per cent, creat-

ing ripple effects across supply chains. The bustling roadside food stalls and restaurants see a remarkable uptick in patronage, further stimulating local economies. This heightened activity, while driven by tradition, underscores the interdependence between cultural practices and economic vitality. The lead-up to Eidul Fitr heralds an unparalleled shopping spree. From clothing and footwear to household items, consumers flock to markets, fueling a retail boom that touches virtually every sector. In 2022, the PRBA estimated that pre-Eid shopping generated sales worth nearly \$500 billion. Textile producers, tailors and small-scale artisans thrive during this period, meeting the demand for new clothes and accessories. This economic momentum cascades to transportation, logistics, and even digital marketplaces, reflecting the transformative power of consumer behaviour during festive seasons. Eidul Fitr itself brings an additional dimension to economic activity. Families reunited for celebrations contribute to a surge in travel, with intercity bus services, railways, and airlines operating at full capacity. Vendors along highways and at transit hubs witness increased business as travelers purchase refreshments and gifts. Eid gatherings also often involve elaborate feasts, spurring demand for meats, spices, and cooking essentials. In 2022, Pakistan's meat consumption saw a 25 per cent spike during Eid, according to industry reports, illustrating the tangible link between festive traditions and market dynamics. The economic significance of Eidul Fitr extends beyond direct spending. Festivals like these promote informal sector employment, offering seasonal opportunities to daily wage earners, artisans and vendors. For instance, roadside mehndi artists and toy sellers experience a windfall, while temporary staff hired by retail outlets and bakeries benefit from increased demand. This cyclical boost supports liveli-

hoods and injects liquidity into grassroots economies often bridging financial gaps for vulnerable populations. Likewise, the intangible yet impactful benefits of Eid celebrations cannot be overlooked. The sense of community and unity fostered during this time enhances social capital, strengthening networks that underpin economic resilience. As families exchange gifts and distribute Eidi, they reinforce cultural norms while simultaneously circulating money within the economy. These microtransactions, though individually modest, aggregate to create substantial economic movement. Pakistan's reliance on a consumer-driven festive economy is a double-edged sword. While it brings much-needed vitality to various sectors, the benefits are often unevenly distributed. Policymakers must consider strategies to amplify the positive effects of Ramazan and Eid-related spending. This could include supporting small businesses through microfinance schemes or improving infrastructure in bustling markets to enhance consumer experiences. Additionally, fostering transparency in Zakat and Fitrana disbursements can maximise their impact, ensuring that the funds reach their intended recipients efficiently. Eidul Fitr is more than a religious occasion; it is a powerful economic catalyst that reflects the interplay between tradition, culture, and commerce. From charitable acts like Zakat and Fitrana to bustling marketplaces and festive travel, the celebration stimulates a diverse array of economic activities that benefit millions. For an economy like Pakistan's, characterised by structural challenges and income disparities, such events provide a much-needed respite and a glimpse of the potential for inclusive growth. As the nation celebrates Eid, it also sows the seeds for broader economic participation, reaffirming that cultural practices and economic prosperity are intrinsically linked. Courtesy The News

Hard or competent state?

Maleeha Lodhi
THERE are several aspects to the debate that has been going on in the media about a 'hard state'. Why, despite an array of coercive instruments and hard power available to the Pakistani state, has it been unable to achieve the core goals of security, stability and the state's financial solvency? A hard state is not necessarily a strong or competent one. Perhaps it is preferable to use the notion of a competent or strong state instead of a 'hard state'. A competent state would mean one that is able to effectively perform the core functions of a strong state: collect taxes to run the state, ensure rule of law, maintain order, control the borders and deliver public goods. It is also one in which the instruments of governance are robust and institutions fit for purpose. Trust is another essential attribute. A well-functioning, trusted state is what constitutes a competent state. Judged against these criteria, Pakistan has a long way to go before it can be considered a strong and competent state. That is a goal to aim for, if not an imperative for the country. Also relevant to this discussion is the recognition that power and authority are not the same thing. People often deem power and authority to be synonymous. But power, however 'hard', does not necessarily confer authority. Authority is where power, legitimacy and public purpose intersect. Authority rests on the legitimate exercise of power in the public interest that goes beyond the narrow interests or self-preservation of the ruling elite. The 'rightful' use of power, deployed to promote a public agenda, bestows authority. Authority is thus more a relationship (with the governed) than a capacity. It is based on consent, willingly given, as well as trust, not coercion. Authority also depends critically on credibility. If one applies these concepts to the present state of play in the country, it becomes more than apparent how the state and those running it come up short. As the ongoing debate about 'hardening the state' has been generated by the grim situation in Balochistan, it needs to be considered at length. The state's managers have mostly used kinetic means to establish peace in a province that has long been characterised by historical grievances, popular discontent, poor governance and a sense of injustice with both the kind of unrepresentative rule thrust upon it and the iniquitous allocation of resources. Today, it is in turmoil and in the midst of a raging insurgency that the state's managers are struggling to contain and defeat. Coercive actions do not 'harden' the state but harden public opinion against the power elite. There is little doubt there is foreign involvement in fomenting terrorist violence and supporting militant groups in Balochistan. Courtesy Dawn

Ahsan chairs steering committee meeting on socio-political domain

MOHSIN ALI

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal on Monday chaired the second steering committee meeting on the socio-political domain, following the directives of the Central Apex Committee concerning the revised National Action Plan 2021.

During the meeting, the minister emphasized the critical challenge of terrorism the country was currently facing in Balochistan, a news release said.

He noted that, in addition to kinetic measures, non-kinetic actions, particularly socio-economic uplift in districts affected by conflict, were essential to improve the situation in a sustainable manner. He recalled that in 2017-18 dur-

ing PM-19's previous tenure, National Internal Security Policy (2018-23) was developed in collaboration with all stakeholders and the approval of civil-military leadership.

The primary objective of this policy was to build on the success of Operation Zarb-e-Azb by prioritising non-kinetic measures. The NISP (2018) provided a comprehensive framework that incorporated actions in administrative, social, economic, political and information domains to consolidate peace in the country.

Unfortunately, the previous government did not implement the NISP (2018) which led to the reversal of gains achieved against terrorism and extremism. Resiliently, the Policy document resonates with the

situation as much today as it did in 2018, and should continue to guide the government.

The creation of this committee, according to the minister, was to ensure that while security agencies perform their duties effectively, civilian agencies must complement their efforts. A holistic approach to counterterrorism needs to be adopted, with inclusive development and governance as the core principle of the agenda. Ahsan Iqbal emphasized that a nation's development could not be achieved without internal peace and harmony. The minister highlighted the importance of provincial governments in this endeavor, particularly after the 18th Constitutional Amendment, which granted provinces greater authority and resources.



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Hanif Abbasi announces reforms to revitalize Pakistan Railways

PEAK POINT

LAHORE: Federal Minister for Railways Muhammad Hanif Abbasi has emphasized the need for immediate reforms in the railways and announced several critical decisions aimed at improving efficiency and service quality.

He chaired a meeting at the Pakistan Railways headquarters on Monday to review the performance of railway divisions and discuss ongoing and upcoming infrastructure projects across the country. Pakistani travel guides

During the meeting, a detailed briefing was given on the current state of railway infrastructure. One of the key areas of focus was the Main Line-1 (ML-1) project. Measures are being introduced to reduce travel time on the route, with a one-year target set to eliminate engineering restrictions. The removal of these restrictions is expected to significantly shorten train journeys. Additionally, work on the Kemari-Hyderabad section has been



ordered to commence without delay. Track rehabilitation projects will be accelerated, and the Project Director has been tasked with preparing railway sleepers within six months. The administration has also been directed to compress a two-year project timeline into just one year.

Four tamping machines will be made operational by the end of the year to support these efforts. Referring to Shahbaz Shari's achievements in Punjab—where three-year projects were completed in a single year—Abbasi urged the railway administration to adopt a similar approach.

He also stressed the need to boost revenue from freight trains while curbing leakages. To enhance the cus-

tomers experience, the online booking system for passenger trains will be upgraded, and freight train bookings will be moved online to eliminate human interference.

The minister also took a strict stance on illegal occupancy, demanding a list of unauthorized individuals residing in railway colonies and imposing a complete ban on unrelated or retired persons staying in railway rest houses. In a move to improve service punctuality, Abbasi set a target of achieving 90-95% train punctuality within three months.

"I will personally monitor punctuality. No train will be delayed for anyone—not even the minister," he stated.

Improving cleanliness and food quality on trains was also discussed, along with monthly performance evaluations for all Divisional Superintendents.

Abbasi announced surprise visits to offices and stations—without prior staff notice—to assess real-time performance.

Barrister Gohar distances PTI from bill tabled in US Congress

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Barrister Gohar apparently distanced the party from the recent bill introduced in the US Congress, while reiterating his party's renewed commitment to securing the release of the PTI founder.

Barrister Gohar stated that "serious and concrete measures" will now be pursued for the release of the party's jailed founding leader. He lamented that the absence of an independent judiciary remains the most significant obstacle to justice.

"If the courts fail to deliver a verdict, then our political alliance will be compelled to make a decision," he said, signalling a potential shift towards collective political action. He also clarified that Senator Azam

Swati had made no such remarks that would warrant disciplinary measures from the party.

On internal party matters, the PTI chairman called for an end to the practice of public oaths and declarations. "Such customs involving the Qur'an and swearing must come to an end. Moving forward, no internal matters will be addressed in the public domain," he asserted.

Regarding the bill introduced in the US Congress, Barrister Gohar downplayed its significance.

"Numerous bills are floated in the US; some are passed, others are not. I haven't seen the bill in question, and PTI has no affiliation with it whatsoever," he remarked, distancing the party from any direct engagement or involvement with the legislation.

Govt committed to eradicating terrorism: Talal Chaudhry

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Interior and Narcotics Control, Talal Chaudhry, on Monday reaffirmed the government's strong commitment to eliminating terrorism and ensuring peace across the country.

Speaking in the National Assembly, he said the recent security operation in Kalang, Mardan, was part of a broader intelligence-based campaign under the National Action Plan (NAP). He clarified that the operation was conducted in a remote, mountainous area with no civilian population in order to avoid collateral damage.

Reading out an official statement issued by the



Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government, the minister said the counter-terrorism operation was carried out on March 29 based on credible intelligence. The area was being used by terrorist elements as a hideout and transit point. According to the statement, several high-profile militants involved in terrorist activities in the region were neutralized.

He highlighted that the operation reflected

the professionalism of Pakistan's security forces, who are committed to both eliminating terrorism and protecting civilians. Talal Chaudhry condemned the politicization of security operations, saying that national security should not be used for political gains. "It is unfortunate that matters of national interest, like counter-terrorism, are being turned into political controversies."

Promotion of interfaith harmony key to regional unity, peace: Sardar Yousaf

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony, Sardar Muhammad Yousaf on Monday emphasized that promoting interfaith harmony is vital for fostering regional unity, solidarity, and peace.

He made these remarks during a meeting with the Ambassador of Kazakhstan, Yerzhan Kistafin, at his office. Reaffirming his ministry's commitment to strengthening relations with brotherly Islamic countries, Minister Yousaf said significant progress had been made in the previous government to promote interfaith harmony. "We are reviving efforts in line with party policy and the directions of Party Leader Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif," he stated.

Minister Yousaf warmly welcomed the ambassador's invitation to participate in the upcoming Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions in Kazakhstan, and expressed interest in enhancing people-to-people ties through the exchange of students and religious scholars between the two countries.

He said Kazakhstan and Pakistan are set to sign several bilateral cooperation agreements in the coming days.



Minister Yousaf further shared that a delegation of Kazakh athletes and businessmen will soon visit Pakistan, with the business delegation scheduled to participate in a business forum in Karachi.

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Kazakhstan was Pakistan's largest trading partner in Central Asia last year, and efforts are underway to resume direct flights between the two countries.

Ambassador Kistafin further shared that a delegation of Kazakh athletes and businessmen will soon visit Pakistan, with the business delegation scheduled to participate in a business forum in Karachi.

He said Kazakhstan and Pakistan are set to sign several bilateral cooperation agreements in the coming days.

Trump's tariff: Pakistan officials in 'continuous contact' with US authorities, says Commerce minister

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan on Monday said Pakistan officials were in continuous contact with the United States (US) authorities over the 29% reciprocal tariff imposed on Pakistan.

Last week, US President Donald Trump ignited a potentially ruinous trade war as he slapped tariffs on imports from around the world and harsh additional levies even on key trading partners. "For decades, our

country has been looted, pillaged, raped and plundered by nations near and far, both friend and foe alike," Trump said as he announced up to 50% reciprocal tariffs on a number of countries, including the country's biggest trading partners.

In a notification on Friday, Pakistan government summoned a meeting of stakeholders on Monday (today) to analyse possible impact of the US tariff on Pakistani products.

Jam Kamal Khan chaired the meeting today with top exporters

from a wide range of sectors to discuss Pakistan's strategy and response.

The meeting was attended by representatives from all major export industries, including textiles, garments, leather, surgical instruments, services, fruits and vegetables, rice, footwear, and more, according to a statement from the Commerce ministry on Monday.

"This broad participation underscored the need for a coordinated national effort to navigate global trade challenges," it said.

"Our trade officers and ambassadors in the US are in continuous contact with the relevant authorities to ensure that Pakistan's concerns are effectively communicated," the minister was quoted as saying in the statement.

He assured exporters of the government's full support, emphasising that the government was "actively working on a comprehensive strategy aimed at achieving a mutually beneficial outcome with the United States".

Chairperson of the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), Senator Rubina Khalid, met with newly appointed Country Director of the World Bank, at BISP HQ today to discuss the progress and follow-up on the CRISP project.

The meeting focused on key initiatives related to the project's objectives and the various challenges BISP is addressing. During the meeting, discussions covered the achievement of the DLs under the CRISP staff, the recruitment of BISP staff for the beneficiary registration process, and a comprehensive review of the NSER questionnaire. Other topics included expanding BISP services at the Union Council (UC) level, finding sustainable solutions for cybersecurity challenges, and addressing several other important issues related to BISP's operations.

Chairperson Senator Rubina Khalid emphasized the need to hire young, energetic staff to facilitate the beneficiary registration process effectively. She also highlighted BISP's ongoing efforts to tackle poverty through its Poverty Graduation strategy, particularly the Benazir Hunarmand Program. This program aims to provide meaningful skills training to beneficiaries, thereby helping them secure job opportunities both in national and international markets. She shared that BISP is currently in consultation with the Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and technical institutions such as NACTTC to provide these technical training opportunities.

Chairperson BISP, WB official discuss CRISP project follow-up

PEAK POINT

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Expressing his views on the occasion, Inter-alia, visit Gurdwara Panja Sahib, Gurdwara Nankana Sahib and Gurdwara Kartarpur Sahib. Ahmad Warraich, stated

Pakistan issues visas to Indian pilgrims for Baisakhi celebrations

PEAK POINT

NEW DELHI: On the occasion of Baisakhi celebrations, the Pakistan High Commission in New Delhi has issued over 6,500 visas to pilgrims from India to participate in the annual festival scheduled to be held in Pakistan from 10-19 April 2025. The pilgrims would, inter-alia, visit Gurdwara Panja Sahib, Gurdwara Nankana Sahib and Gurdwara Kartarpur Sahib.

Expressing his views on the occasion, Inter-alia, visit Gurdwara Panja Sahib, Gurdwara Nankana Sahib and Gurdwara Kartarpur Sahib. Ahmad Warraich, stated



that the large number of visas issued by the Government of Pakistan was a manifestation of our policy to foster harmony and promote understanding between peoples, cultures and religions. He added that Pakistan would continue to facilitate such visits to

sacred and holy sites. Every year, a large number of Yatraees from India visit Pakistan to observe various religious festivals on occasions under the framework of the Pakistan-India Protocol on Visits to Religious Shrines of 1974.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Commerce, Jam Kamal Khan chairs a high-level meeting with top exporters to discuss strategy on US tariff-stakeholders from key sectors present, aiming for a unified national trade approach.