



**Finance minister engages business leaders to shape budget priorities, boost growth**



**GB Governor, Aleem Khan discuss road projects, hail Pakistan's diplomatic success**



**PPP chief Bilawal Bhutto meets Shazia Marri**

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## PM Shehbaz, CDF Munir discuss Pakistan's efforts to mediate between US and Iran

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Chief of Defence Forces and Chief of Army Staff Field Marshal Asim Munir on Thursday reviewed the "progress of Pakistan's mediatory efforts to achieve sustainable peace in the region". In a statement, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said CDF Munir called on PM Shehbaz. "The dignitaries reviewed the progress of Pakistan's mediatory efforts to achieve sustainable peace in the region. The two leaders expressed satisfaction over the de-escalation achieved so far and stressed upon the need for maintaining peace and ceasefire by all parties," it said. "The leadership appreciated the restraint demonstrated by all sides and reiterated Pakistan's commit-

ment to facilitate and provide all-out support to both sides to arrive at a peacefully negotiated settlement," the statement said. The statement said the premier lauded the commitment of the parties involved in the process and wished them success in their pursuit of peace. "He also renewed his invitation to the arriving delegations and assured them of the highest consideration and support by Pakistan," the statement concluded. The meeting takes place as delegations from the US and Iran are due in Islamabad to hold negotiations over the weekend. Pakistan positioned itself as a facilitator in the peace process between Tehran and Washington after the US and Israel launched attacks on Iran on February 28, setting off a conflict that gave rise to a global fuel crisis.



ISLAMABAD: COAS and CDF, Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

## Pakistan's envoy to US acknowledges China's quiet but persuasive role in Iran talks

PEAK POINT



WASHINGTON: Pakistan's mediation that helped bring about a temporary US-Iran ceasefire has drawn global attention, with Islamabad's envoy to Washington reiterating that the breakthrough was the result of "an intense diplomatic effort that was in progress over the past few weeks."

In an interview with CNN, Pakistan's Ambassador to the US Rizwan Saeed Sheikh said Islamabad's role was underpinned by trust from all sides, careful consultations, and a commitment to discretion. The interview on Wednesday came as Washington announced dispatching a high-level negotiating team led by Vice President J.D. Vance to Islamabad to begin formal talks on ending hostilities following the ceasefire announced early Wednesday. While Ambassador Sheikh did not map out specific country roles in detail, he acknowledged Beijing's constructive stance. "China, from the very start, has also been mentioning the exercise of restraint and affording space for diplomacy to both sides," he told CNN — a comment that aligns with broader diplomatic signals that China used its leverage with Tehran to encourage Iran to engage.

## Nobel Peace Prize nominations sought for PM, CDF and DPM for brokering US-Iran truce



PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: A resolution has been submitted in the Punjab Assembly seeking the nomination of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Chief of Defence Forces and Chief of Army Staff Field Marshal Asim Munir and Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar for the Nobel Peace Prize.

The resolution, submitted by PML-N Chief Whip Rana Muhammad Arshad, praises the trio for their effective diplomacy in the backdrop of the Middle East crisis, stating that their efforts paved the way for promoting peace and stability in the region.

Pakistan made headlines worldwide after Islamabad brokered a US-Iran ceasefire just hours before Donald Trump's "hell" warning

was set to expire. The international community breathed a sigh of relief on late Tuesday night after US President Trump announced that he had agreed to a two-week ceasefire with Iran after discussions with PM Shehbaz and Field Marshal Munir. During the last-ditch effort, PM Shehbaz urged Trump to extend his deadline for two weeks to give diplomacy a chance, which was ultimately accepted by the US president.

DPM Dar remained engaged with all the stakeholders and Washington and played key role in bringing the US and Iran to table.

As a result, Pakistan is set to host the US and Iran delegations after the announcement of a temporary ceasefire brokered by Islamabad.

Referring to the Mideast crisis, the resolution notes that tensions among Israel, the US and Iran had intensified, posing a serious threat to global peace. It further said that the Mideast conflict could escalate into a major international crisis at any moment. The resolution demands that the PM, the CDF and the DPM be nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in recognition of their diplomatic efforts.

## Budget FY27: IMF to dispatch mission to Pakistan next month

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: The International Monetary Fund (IMF) plans to dispatch its mission to Pakistan next month to finalise the upcoming budget for 2026-27.

The Fund envisages the Federal Board of Revenue's (FBR) tax collection target of Rs15.564 trillion for the next fiscal year. Keeping in view the geopolitical situation, the government has decided to kick-start the consultation process to finalise the contours of the coming budget.

## Bahrain's King lauds Pakistan's role in Iran-US ceasefire

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: King of Bahrain Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa on Thursday conveyed his deep appreciation to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif for Pakistan's success in bringing about a ceasefire between Iran and the U.S. that has created the prospects for lasting peace in the region. Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif held a telephone call with Bahrain's King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa. During their warm telephonic conversation, the prime minister.

## Pakistan condemns Israeli aggression against Lebanon in 'strongest terms', says it undermines peace efforts

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Thursday strongly condemned Israel's continued attacks on Lebanon, cautioning that they undermine global efforts for regional peace. "Pakistan condemns, in the strongest terms, the ongoing Israeli aggression against Lebanon, resulting in the loss of innocent lives and the widespread destruction of infrastructure," the Foreign Office (FO) said in a statement.

It warned, "The Israeli actions undermine international efforts to establish peace and stability in the region and constitute a blatant violation of international law and fundamental humanitarian principles."

Pakistan called upon the international community to "take urgent steps to end Israeli aggression



against Lebanon".

It reiterated its "unwavering solidarity with the government and people of Lebanon during this difficult time", adding that it supported Lebanon's sovereignty and territorial integrity, as well as its peace and stability.

Lebanon declared a national day of mourning on Thursday after Israeli strikes pummeled the country, killing over 200 people and calling into question the Pakistan-bro-

kered ceasefire between the United States and Iran.

The Lebanese prime minister's office said Thursday would be "a national day of mourning for the martyrs and wounded of the Israeli attacks that targeted hundreds of innocent, defenceless civilians", ordering the closure of public administrations and the lowering of flags.

Hours later, Hezbollah said it had fired rockets towards Israel in response to what it called a violation

of the US-Iran truce.

There had been conflicting messages about whether the fighting in Lebanon was included in the truce, with Israel insisting that it was not.

Israel launched its heaviest and most coordinated air assault on Lebanon on Wednesday since the US-Iran war began.

Consecutive explosions rocked Beirut, sending vast plumes of smoke over the capital. The Israeli military claimed it struck more than 100 sites across Beirut, the Bekaa Valley and southern Lebanon.

Health Minister Rakan Nasserredine said: "The death toll stands at 203 martyrs and more than 1,000 wounded in the aggression against Lebanon on Wednesday."

## Iran, Saudi FMs hold first call since start of conflict, discuss ways to reduce tensions



PEAK POINT

IRAN: Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan received a phone call from his Iranian counterpart Abbas Araghchi, the Saudi foreign ministry said on Thursday. It marked the first official contact between the countries since Tehran launched strikes against its Gulf neighbours in retaliation for Israeli-American attacks. "During the call, they reviewed the latest developments and discussed ways to reduce tensions to restore security and stability in the region," the Saudi ministry said. The phone call comes a day after the announcement of a two-week ceasefire between the United States and Israel.

Following the ceasefire, Prince Faisal also held phone calls with his counterparts.



# SPORTS



## Zalmi edge spirited Kingsmen by four wickets in PSL thriller



**PEAK POINT** KARACHI: Peshawar Zalmi survived a late scare to beat Hyderabad Kingsmen by four wickets in a tense HBL Pakistan Super League encounter at the National Bank Stadium on Wednesday night, overcoming a spirited defence of a modest total in an unusually subdued atmosphere.

The venue painted a picture of emptiness. With stands largely vacant due to the government's ongoing austerity drive and the stadium's iconic roof removed as part of a planned renovation, the action unfolded in stark openness.

The silence in the stands, however, was replaced by relentless energy from Kingsmen players, who attempted to compensate for the lack of crowd support with constant chatter and encouragement on the field.

Defending a below-par 145 — and still searching for their first win of the tournament — the Kingsmen relied on intensity and discipline to drag the contest deep into the night. Babar Azam, however, was replaced by relentless energy from Kingsmen players, who attempted to compensate for the lack of crowd support with constant chatter and encouragement on the field.

bowlers triggered a dramatic ish, slowdown.

Sri Lankan spinner Maheesh Theekshana and pacer Mohammad Ali conceded only nine runs across two tight overs, applying pressure that shifted momentum.

Hunain Shah then produced a crucial spell, extending a streak of dot balls while dismissing Abdul Samad to leave Zalmi suddenly uncertain.

Itfikhah Ahmed, however, held his nerve. The experienced all-rounder broke the tension by driving Hunain through the line for four before launching a towering six to reduce the equation to two runs off two balls.

Calm singles by Itfikhah (15 off 10) and Aamer Jamal sealed victory with four wickets in hand. Earlier, Zalmi's chase had begun briskly. Mohammad Haris flicked Ali for a six off the very first ball before departing early, but captain Babar Azam and Kusal Mendis ensured momentum remained intact.

## Lahore Qalandars dream drives Mohammad Naeem's rise in PSL

**PEAK POINT**

KARACHI: For Mohammad Naeem, wearing the jersey of Lahore Qalandars is more than just another franchise stint. It is the fulfilment of a dream that began when the Pakistan Super League first captured his imagination. Now in his second season with the Qalandars, Naeem speaks with quiet confidence about a journey shaped by opportunity, belief and relentless hard work. "First of all, I thank Allah for being part of such a great franchise," he said. "Since the PSL started, Lahore Qalandars were my dream and favourite team, and now this is my second year here."

At the heart of his progress lies a simple but powerful factor: trust.



## PFF President Gillani dedicates victory to PM, CDF

**PEAK POINT**

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Football Federation (PFF) President Syed Mohsen Gillani has congratulated the nation on the record-breaking victory achieved by the Pakistan women's team in the first match of their FIFA series campaign and dedicated the victory to the leadership of the country. "At a time when our PM and CDF are playing a historic role for peace our girls have created history on the football field. We dedicate this victory to our leadership for their dedication. We will do our part to make Pakistan proud on the football field."

## PSL 11: Babar Azam becomes fastest batter to score 12,000 T20 runs



**PEAK POINT** KARACHI: Pakistan Super League (PSL) 11 fixture against Karachi Kings at the National Bank Stadium. Babar Azam on Thursday rewrote the history books as he became the fastest batter to score 12,000 runs in men's T20 during his side's 337 innings and breached the 12000-run barrier with a six off Kings' Khushdil Shah on the third over. As a result, the right-handed batter entered the fixture with 11987 runs to his name in just 31-year-old became the fastest among the 12 batters to breach the 12000-run barrier, taking just 338 innings, five fewer than Gayle, who conceded 345 innings. He is followed by Kohli and Australia's David Warner.

just the 12th batter in the history of the men's T20s to reach the milestone, joining the likes of West Indies' Chris Gayle and Kieron Pollard, India's Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma, and compatriot Shoaib Malik in the elusive list. Interestingly, Babar is the fastest among the 12 batters to breach the 12000-run barrier, taking just 338 innings, five fewer than Gayle, who conceded 345 innings. He is followed by Kohli and Australia's David Warner.

## PCB adds third-place play-off to Women's T20 Tournament after rain disruptions



## ITF Pakistan 3rd Zainab Ali Naqvi Memorial World Jrs Tennis C'ship continues

**PEAK POINT** ISLAMABAD: The ITF Pakistan 3rd Zainab Ali Naqvi Memorial World Juniors Tennis Championship 2026 (Leg-1) continued here at the PTF Tennis Complex on Thursday.

A total of 24 boys and 15 girls from 14 countries — including Pakistan, Kazakhstan, Singapore, Japan, China, Australia, Russia, Poland, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Hong Kong, and Thailand — are participating in the championship.

In the Boys' Singles event, three Pakistani players-Mikaeel Ali Baig, Hamza Roman, and Abubakar Talha won their respective matches and qualified for the semifinals. In the Boys' Doubles event, the pairs of Mikaeel Ali Baig & Ahtesham Humayun and Hamza Roman & Abubakar Talha delivered outstanding performances to qualify for the final.



## History made: Pakistan open FIFA Series with record-breaking victory



**PEAK POINT** ISLAMABAD: Pakistan made a sizzling start to their FIFA Series campaign with a record-breaking 8-0 victory over the Turks and Caicos Islands at the Stade Alassane Ouattara in Abidjan on Thursday. Four goals by four different scorers in the first half set the tone for Adeel Rizki's side before two more players got their names on the scoresheet as Pakistan surpassed their previous-best victory — 7-0 against the Maldives in September 2022. Pakistan made their attacking intent clear from the very beginning when Mariam Mahmood, fresh from winning the Welsh league title with Wrexham Women, struck the side netting with a shot from an acute angle inside the first four minutes. After Nadia Khan tested goalkeeper Archenie Desir with a shot from long range, Pakistan opened the scoring in the 10th minute with Zahmena Malik finding the back of the net. It was 2-0 two minutes later, Aqsa Mushtaq slotting in after a rebound after Mariam had forced a save from Desir. Pakistan continued to press with midfield Layla Banaras showing her quality when she made it 3-0 with a smart finish just past the half hour mark. In a game where Pakistan had pinned their opponents in the opposing half for almost the entirety of the match, Mariam got on the scoresheet in the 38th when she expertly volleyed in a cross at the back post. Pakistan continued in the same vein in the second half, Nadia planting a perfect header to a cross from the left in the 56th to make it 5-0.

Abubakar Talha (PAK) beat Ganuka Fernando (SRI), Jayden Park (HKG) 6-1, 6-4; Ahtesham Humayun, Mikaeel Ali Baig (PAK) beat Zohaib Afzal Malik, Hassan Usmani (PAK) 6-4, 6-1. Girls Doubles Semifinals: Soha Ali (PAK), Phitchayaphak Srimuk (THA) beat Rino Shiden (JPN), Eyu Yoshida (JPN) 3-6, 6-3 (10-7); Zihan Feng (CHN), Yelizaveta Slepchenko (KAZ) beat Yeanna Chowary (BAN), Yijia Wang (CHN) 7-5, 6-2. The matches will start tomorrow at 10am.

# Government faces growing criticism over unanswered questions in national assembly

**NADEEM TANOLI**

ISLAMABAD: During the recent National Assembly Question Answer session, the Ministry for Interior and Narcotics Control faced mounting criticism as multiple questions on critical national issues remained unanswered, sparking outrage among lawmakers. The Ministry's repeated failure to respond to vital queries on government policies, law enforcement, and infrastructure projects has raised concerns about the government's accountability. Among the questions left unanswered were issues related to the recruitment age limit for Assistant/Deputy

Superintendents of jail (raised by Syeda Shehla Raza), the delay in constructing Jinnah Medical Complex and Danish University (raised by Mr. Asif Khan), and steps taken to strengthen law enforcement agencies to tackle the growing cyber crime epidemic (raised by Mr. James Iqbal). One of the most talked about issues during the session involved the misconduct of a PIA cabin crew member, which was initially raised in a privilege motion by Senator Bilal Ahmad Khan Mandokhail. The committee had previously directed PIA to ground the crew member and the pilot involved, but PIA's blatant disregard for

these instructions has sparked anger among lawmakers. Senator Mandokhail questioned why the crew member was allowed to continue duties despite clear orders for grounding, describing the incident as a "humiliation" that could easily have been avoided. While some members of the National Assembly welcomed the detailed answers provided by Minister for Interior and Narcotics Control, Senator Syed Mohsin Raza Naqvi, others expressed frustration over the lack of clear solutions to pressing issues. For instance, Mr. Malik Shakir Bashir Awan's question regarding the

construction of a new slaughterhouse in Islamabad highlighted bureaucratic delays, with the minister revealing that, despite efforts to establish a state of the art facility, the project is still stuck in limbo. The session also tackled police reforms, with Mr. James Iqbal raising concerns over the government's progress in modernizing and restructuring police forces. The government failed to address crucial steps in reforming the police system at the federal level, despite ongoing demands for better law enforcement and accountability mechanisms. Another hotly debated issue was the

management and progress of several stalled development projects, with questions raised about the delay in setting up a rescue center in Sector I-16 and the insufficient number of passport offices in Karachi's suburban areas. While the Minister for Interior provided responses to some queries, key information related to the establishment of new facilities remained absent. The lack of detailed responses from the Ministry during this session has left many members questioning the efficacy and transparency of the government's handling of national infrastructure, law enforcement, and social safety projects.

Lawmakers are calling for swift reforms and are demanding that the Ministry's repeated evasion of critical queries not go unnoticed. While the Minister did provide some answers, including updates on the Pakistan Coast Guard's anti-smuggling efforts and the ongoing battle against drug trafficking, the failure to provide responses to other critical areas has raised doubts over the Ministry's commitment to public accountability. With repeated deferrals and non answers, the government's credibility on law enforcement and justice reforms is now under serious scrutiny.

## Chaudhry Inam Zafar and Hafiz Usman Abbasi pay tribute to Army Chief General Asim Munir for global ceasefire efforts

**PEAK POINT**

RAWALPINDI: Central Vice President of Awaam Pakistan, Chaudhry Inam Zafar, and Additional General Secretary Hafiz Usman Abbasi have paid tribute to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar for their role in the decision to postpone U.S. and Israeli military action against Iran for two weeks. They stated that this step is a positive

development not only for national security but also for the country's economy. In their joint statement, the leaders of Awaam Pakistan said that the immediate effects of the ceasefire announcement are clearly visible in the market and the economy. A significant decline in oil prices and an upward trend in stock markets are evidence that the temporary tensions have been effectively managed. Chaudhry Inam Zafar



further stated that this decision not only highlights Pakistan's responsibility at the global level but will also

have a positive impact on the national economy and the daily lives of the people. He added that the stance of Army

Chief General Asim Munir, a source of pride for the nation, has proven to be correct in maintaining peace and ensuring economic stability. The entire nation appreciates the efforts of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar. Hafiz Usman Abbasi said that, according to economists, the ceasefire and postponement of military action have boosted investor confidence,

and improvements have been observed in Pakistan's oil and stock markets at the international level. The leaders of Awaam Pakistan concluded that this step is an example of how national security and economic interests can be aligned in decision-making, and expressed hope that such decisions will continue to promote economic stability and strengthen international relations in the future.

# Opinion & Editorial

## War and peace

**Khurram Husain**

I HAVE waited many years, decades, to write these words and the time has finally come. Today, I feel proud to be a Pakistani. Today, my country stands out among the comity of nations as a peacemaker of historic proportions. This is, quite possibly, the single biggest day in the life of our country, not underestimate what just happened. A madman president of the United States had just said "a whole civilisation will die tonight, never to be brought back" on the morning of Tuesday, April 7, the day his self-imposed deadline to reopen the Strait of Hormuz was set to expire. The words sounded ominously like a threat to use nuclear weapons, especially when coupled with Vice President J.D. Vance's remarks that the US has "tools in our toolkit that we so far haven't decided to use".

As the deadline neared, attentive observers shared screenshots showing heavy bombers taking off from airbases in the UK, headed for Iran, with a seven- to eight-hour flight path ahead of them. It was one of the most ominous moments in living memory.

So it is natural that when news first broke, via a tweet from the Pakistani prime minister that a ceasefire agreement had been reached, a brief flare-up of elation ensued. We waited breathlessly to hear acknowledgement and confirmation from

the US and Iran, which came a few hours later. The most ruinous war of our time was ended before it could escalate into a catastrophe. And Pakistan played the lead role in bringing this about. This was no minor feat.

There were moments along the way when it seemed all was lost. Even now, the deal is not sealed and the risk of sliding back into hostilities is real. Israel is continuing to bomb Lebanon, prompting a call from their parliament's Speaker to the Pakistani ambassador asking him to press the Israelis to halt their aggression. Iran's acceptance of the condition to reopen the strait remains 'conditional' and we wait to see what these conditions are. To me, it is unlikely that Iran will agree to restore the freedom of navigation as it existed before the war. But to retain full control over the strait while remaining within the bounds of international maritime law, Iran will need the cooperation of Oman because a significant part of the Strait of Hormuz falls in Oman's territorial waters.

The most ruinous war of our time was ended before it could escalate into a catastrophe. And Pakistan played the lead role in bringing this about. What is clear, however, is that it was Trump who sought and pushed for a ceasefire deal because even though he could deploy bluster including threats to destroy an entire civilisation, he was also boxed in by the

economic fallout that the war was creating. The real volatility was yet to hit because countries around the world had stocked up on oil inventories all through 2025 and the opening months of 2026 and all through March. As hostilities rolled on and the strait remained closed, those stocks were drawn down. Whatever hikes we saw in oil prices during this time were just the beginning of what is to come if the strait is not reopened soon.

America cannot remain shielded from high oil prices for long. It may be the last to be hit by the physical shortages that are inevitable if the closure of the strait stretches out for much longer, but its ability to withstand an economic shock is probably the lowest among developed countries. That's not a judgement on the depth of the American economy's resilience. It is a judgement on the ability of the American consumer to withstand even a little bit of pain. With petrol prices rising towards \$5 at the pump, mortgages skyrocketing due to the blowouts on 10-year Treasury paper, the mood in America could turn dour against the president very quickly. Perhaps it is because he was mindful of the economic storm coming his way — if the war was prolonged, the damage to oil infrastructure mounted and the closure of the strait stretched out — that Trump began suing for peace.

Courtesy Dawn

## Saving water, securing futures-reviving community ponds

**Dr Mumraiz Khan**

Over the past few decades, Pakistan's rain-fed and arid regions have undergone significant transformation. Traditional water systems, once integral to rural life, have steadily declined. Small community reservoirs, locally known as Bann or Chappar/Chappri, were once a defining feature of the rural landscape. Within living memory, my village had more than two dozen ponds; today, only a few remain. Their disappearance has serious implications for environmental sustainability and rural livelihoods.

This decline is especially concerning as Pakistan's population has surpassed 241 million (Census 2023) and grows at about 2.55% annually - adding over 5 million people each year - placing immense pressure on already scarce water resources. For generations, these small-scale reservoirs formed the foundation of life in water-scarce areas. Constructed and maintained through collective community efforts, they captured rainwater, particularly during the monsoon, and stored it for year-round use. They provided water for humans, livestock and wildlife; supported crops; and met daily needs. Their proximity to settlements and fields made them highly accessible, embedding them in the social and economic fabric of rural communities. Their importance extended beyond immediate water provision. A key function was groundwater recharge. By allowing rainwater to percolate into the soil, they replenished aquifers and maintained water balance. In areas where groundwater is now the primary source of irrigation and drinking water, the disappearance of these ponds has disrupted this process, contributing to declining water tables and increasing pressure on limited resources - pressures further intensified by rapid population growth.

Courtesy Tribune

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## Energy conservation

The government's latest directive for markets and malls to close early to conserve energy is a great example of something that makes perfect sense as a permanent reform, but is being used only as a stopgap. Shops and markets in Pakistan - major urban centres like Karachi and Lahore, in particular - remain open extremely late every day of the week, unlike in most other countries. Even in the United States, one of the beacons of capitalism, most malls and retail outlets close relatively early, by around 9pm on weekdays and 6pm on weekends. Even restaurants rarely stay open past 8pm or 9pm on weekdays. The few shops that do stay ajar late are mostly convenience stores, supermarkets or large grocery stores, specifically because they sell everyday essentials. Meanwhile, there are several common-sense measures that can be imposed without hampering commerce, helping the country cut down on energy consumption. In that, we can take a cue from the outside world. In New York City, after the city government ordered stores to close their doors while air conditioning was running, some people worried it would reduce incoming foot traffic. However, clothing giant H&M later estimated that it saved almost \$10,000 in energy costs a year, or about 77,500kWh, on average per store, with no noticeable reduction in foot traffic.

## Foolproof security arranged for foreign guests, Naqvi assures US envoy ahead of US-Iran talks in Islamabad



PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi on Thursday assured US Ambassador to Pakistan Natalie Baker of foolproof security for all foreign dignitaries ahead of the US-Iran talks scheduled in Islamabad this week. Pakistan is set to host in-person talks between the US and Iran on

Saturday after a two-week ceasefire was announced between the two countries, bringing a pause to the hostilities which broke out on February 28. In a meeting with the US envoy, Naqvi assured her of the security arrangements taken ahead of the talks and stated that the US Vice President JD Vance, US Envoy to the Middle East Steve Witkoff, and Jared Kushner were

“our special guests,” according to a statement issued by the Ministry of Interior.

“A comprehensive plan has been prepared to provide foolproof security to all foreign guests in every respect,” the minister was quoted as saying. The US envoy appreciated Pakistan’s diplomatic role during the meeting. Meanwhile, the Islamabad Police, in a traffic advisory posted on X, said diversions will be placed on the Express Highway due to the “movement of foreign delegations”, advising commuters to plan their travel accordingly. The advisory directed commuters to cooperate with the traffic police. A day earlier, sources told Dawn that a 30-member advance US team had already arrived in Islamabad to review security arrangements. Authorities also declared two local holidays in Islamabad and Rawalpindi on Thursday and Friday to ensure security for the scheduled talks.

## Finance minister engages business leaders to shape budget priorities, boost growth

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Finance Minister Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb on Thursday held a virtual meeting with presidents and senior representatives of chambers of commerce and business entities from across Pakistan to discuss the prevailing economic situation, upcoming budget priorities, and measures to strengthen economic recovery, the Finance Division said in a statement.

The meeting, attended by Minister of State for Finance Bilal Azhar Kayani and senior officials from the Finance Division, Revenue Division, and Tax Policy Office, lasted nearly 90 minutes.

Opening the session, the finance minister welcomed participants and highlighted Pakistan’s growing global prominence amid evolving regional dynamics. He emphasized the importance of structured dialogue with the private sector to gather first-hand insights ahead of key engagements with international financial institutions and global counterparts.

“The purpose of this meeting extends beyond taxation and budget discussions,” he said, “focusing on practical ideas to leverage opportunities for trade, investment, and sustainable economic growth.”

Aurangzeb noted that Pakistan entered the current challenging phase from a position of relative macroeconomic stability, supported by fiscal discipline and strengthened external buffers.

Highlighting recent economic developments, he pointed to improved fiscal management, fulfillment of external obligations, and targeted support for vulnerable segments.

He urged participants to provide actionable proposals, particularly in trade facilitation, logistics, and regional connectivity, to capitalize on Pakistan’s potential as a transshipment and investment hub. Business leaders presented recommendations to improve the overall business environment, facilitate exports, enhance productivity, and align policies with regional benchmarks.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb chairing a virtual meeting with presidents and senior bearers of Chambers of Commerce and Business Entities from across the country to discuss the prevailing economic situation, upcoming budget priorities, and avenues for strengthening economic recovery and growth.

## Pakistan eyes major boost in tyre exports as Chinese-Backed JV Announces \$120 million expansion

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan held a detailed meeting with Mr. Jin Yongsheng, Chairman of Service Long March Tyres (Private) Limited, and his delegation to discuss investment expansion, export growth, and tariff policy support for Pakistan’s tyre industry. Federal Secretary Commerce Jawad Paul and senior officials also attended the meeting, said a release issued here on Thursday. During the discussion, the company



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan (left) and his delegation (right) meeting with Mr. Jin Yongsheng, Chairman of Service Long March Tyres (Private) Limited, and his delegation to discuss investment expansion, export growth, and tariff policy support for Pakistan’s tyre industry.

nificant progress in global tyre markets, with exports to the United States and Brazil increasing rapidly. Pakistan has emerged as the fifth-largest exporter of tyres to the United States and the seventh-largest to Brazil, marking a notable shift from virtually no presence in these markets just a few years ago. This growth has largely been attributed to the transfer of technology and expertise through collaboration with Chinese partners, which has enabled local manufacturing to meet international standards and compete globally.

## GB Governor, Aleem Khan discuss road projects, hail Pakistan’s diplomatic success

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Governor Gilgit-Baltistan Syed Mehdi Shah on Thursday called on Federal Minister for Communications Abdul Aleem Khan to discuss infrastructure development and improvement of road networks in the region. During the meeting, both leaders exchanged views on matters of mutual interest and expressed satisfaction over Pakistan’s recent diplomatic achievements, congratulating each other on the success, said a press release issued here on Thursday. Abdul Aleem Khan remarked that by the grace of Almighty Allah, Pakistan’s dignity and prestige have significantly increased. The meeting also included discussion on the proposed Motorway Project from Manshehra, Naran, Kaghan and Babusar Top to Jalkhand (MNJ). Abdul Aleem Khan stated



that this Motorway would serve as an alternative to the Karakoram Highway KKH and reduce travel distance by 100 kilometres as well. He added that facilitating easier travel and promoting tourism this project will be a game changer for the region. Governor Gilgit-Baltistan, Syed Mehdi Shah highlighted various issues related to the Communications Sector in Gilgit-Baltistan. In response, Federal Minister Abdul Aleem Khan assured full cooperation and promised the provision of Emergency Service 1122 on highways in the region.

## GPS Fatima Khel in Bannu faces serious challenges

ABDUS SALAM BAITAB

BANNU: A 125-year-old institution, Government Primary School Fatima Khel in Bannu, which has been imparting education for generations, is currently facing serious challenges. With over 900 students enrolled, the school has only nine classrooms, which are insufficient to accommodate all students. Two sections from each class are being taught in a single room, creating significant difficulties in the teaching process. The shortage of teaching staff has further compounded the problem. District Education Officer Abdul Malik paid a surprise visit to the school and assured that steps would be taken for the implementation of the PC-1 development plan. According to



details, an enrollment awareness walk was organized by the Government Primary School Fatima Khel, led by Head Teacher Malik Tariq Khan. During the visit, the District Education Officer was briefed that the school was established in 1901 and was formally taken into government control in 1928. Over the years, the institution has produced dozens of specialist doctors, directors, professors, and other officers who began their educational journey here.

## Awareness session and open court held to resolve public grievances

ABDUS SALAM BAITAB

BANNU: An awareness session and open court (Khuli Kachehri) on the role, importance, effectiveness, and objectives of the Provincial Ombudsperson of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was held in District Bannu, led by Provincial Ombudsperson Rukhsana Mehdi. While addressing the session, the Ombudsperson highlighted the importance of her office and urged citizens of Bannu Division, especially women, to approach the Provincial Ombudsperson to register complaints regarding property rights and workplace harassment. She emphasized that this platform provides quick and affordable justice, ensuring that



women are not deprived of their property rights or subjected to injustice and harassment at workplaces. Commissioner Bannu Division, Captain (Retd.) Khalid Mahmood, welcomed the Ombudsperson and appreciated her visit, stating that it brought honor to the region. He further mentioned that the awareness session and open court could also be viewed live via Facebook in districts Bannu, Lakki Marwat.

## Haji Camp is suffering from mismanagement and negligence

WAJIHA TAMSEEL MIRZA

LAHORE: Haji Camp held near Lahore / Nolakha Landa Bazar suffers from the worst negligence of the administration. Haji Camp set up in an old dilapidated building where thousands of pilgrims participated. Due to the negligence of the administration, the trainees in some Hajin camps have been facing problems such as lack of facilities, rush, stampede, the training staff watching the pilgrims, and other such problems, according to eyewitnesses. According to the initial report, due to rain, the pilgrims who came to receive training were shifted to the adjacent



girls’ college where the children were busy studying at that time and the room provided to the pilgrims faced problems such as lack of electricity, limited capacity. The Government of Punjab must review the problems faced by Haji Camps. So that such negligence can be avoided in the coming days.