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## PM Shehbaz meets Chinese Ambassador, discuss regional situation & Pakistan's peace efforts

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday met with Ambassador of the People's Republic of China, Jiang Zaidong, during a courtesy call paid on him, where the regional situation in the Middle East and Pakistan's peace efforts also came under discussion.

The prime minister was assisted by Deputy Prime Minister & Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar, Minister for Planning, Development & Special Initiatives Dr. Ahsan Iqbal, Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Atullah Tarar, SAPM Syed Tariq Fatemi, and Foreign Secretary Ambassador Amna Baloch, a Prime Minister's Office news

release said.

The prime minister conveyed his warm regards and greetings to President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Qiang. While expressing his satisfaction at the positive trajectory of Pakistan-China bilateral relations, the prime minister reaffirmed that Pakistan took great pride in its All-Weather Cooperative Strategic Partnership with China. He also spoke of his resolve to continue working closely with the Chinese leadership to ensure that the relationship grows from strength to strength.

The Chinese Ambassador thanked the prime minister for receiving him and expressed China's appreciation of Pakistan's diplomatic efforts.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of China to Pakistan H.E Jiang Zaidong called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

## 9 killed in armed attack at mining site in Balochistan's Chagai

PEAK POINT



QUETTA: At least nine people working at a copper and gold project site in Balochistan's Chagai district were killed in an armed attack by unidentified assailants. In a statement, the mining

company National Resources Limited (NRL) said the attack took place on Wednesday evening, adding that security forces, including the Frontier Corps, responded promptly, secured the area and launched a clearance operation. The company did not mention any casualties in its statement. However, local authorities have confirmed the incident and nine casualties. "At least nine employees, including two security guards, were killed," a senior official of the Chagai administration said on condition of anonymity. Police officials also confirmed the attack and the killing of nine people. All nine bodies were taken to Prince Fahad Hospital in Dalbandin. In its statement, NRL said it remained "fully committed to the development and empowerment of local communities in Balochistan, with a strong focus on improving livelihoods and contributing to economic upliftment". "Over 90 per cent of the workforce at the Darigwan site comprises individuals.

## US Navy Secretary Phelan fired, say sources

MAHPARA ZAMAN



WASHINGTON: Navy Secretary John Phelan has been fired, a US official and a person familiar with the matter said on Wednesday, in another wartime shakeup at the Pentagon coming just weeks after Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth ousted the Army's top general.

The Pentagon announced his departure in a brief statement, saying he was leaving the administration "effective immediately." But it did not provide a reason or say whether it was his decision to go. The sources, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said Phelan was dismissed in part because he was moving too slow to implement reforms to speed shipbuilding and because he had fallen out with key Pentagon leadership. One source cited bad relationships with Hegseth, Hegseth's deputy, Steve Feinberg, as well as the Navy's number 2 civilian, Hung Cao, who the Pentagon said will now take over as acting Navy secretary. The source also cited an ethics investigation into Phelan's office.

A billionaire seen as having close ties to President Donald Trump, Phelan is the first administration-picked service secretary to be fired since Trump came back into office last year. His departure fits within a broader context of upheaval at all levels of leadership at the Pentagon under Hegseth's watch, including the firing last year of the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Air Force General CQ Brown, as well as the chief of naval operations and Air Force vice chief of staff.

## FO slams India's 'baseless propaganda' linking Pakistan with Pahalgam incident

PEAK POINT



ISLAMABAD: The Foreign Office on Thursday slammed India for resorting to a campaign of baseless allegations and propaganda linking Pakistan with the

April 2025 Pahalgam incident.

"At a time when Pakistan, along with its international partners, is undertaking concerted diplomatic efforts for regional and international peace and security, it is deplorable that India has once again resorted to a campaign of baseless allegations and propaganda to link Pakistan with the Pahalgam incident," the FO said in a statement.

The Foreign Office response came after the Indian Army issued remarks on the Pahalgam anniversary.

The longtime neighbouring adversaries went to war in May last year after India launched an unprovoked attack on Pakistan following the attack on tourists in Pahalgam, Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK), which claimed the lives of 26 people. Without offering any evidence, New Delhi had accused Islamabad of orchestrating the deadly attack in Pahalgam.

## AI startup Cursor with Pakistani co-founder set for \$60bn deal with SpaceX

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Cursor, an AI code-generation startup co-founded by Pakistani-born Sualah Asif, has secured a \$60 billion acquisition deal with Elon Musk's SpaceX, according to multiple reports on Thursday. Along with OpenAI and Anthropic, Cursor is one of several Silicon Valley startups that have drawn waves of developers by using artificial intelligence to automate coding, a business where AI companies have found early commercial traction, according to Reuters. SpaceX announced in a post on X that Cursor gave SpaceX the right.

## Naqvi, US envoy discuss diplomatic efforts for holding 2nd round of US-Iran talks in Islamabad

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi met US Chargé d'Affaires to Pakistan, Natalie Baker, in Islamabad, where the two discussed ongoing diplomatic efforts to hold a second round of US-Iran talks, the interior ministry said.

According to the interior ministry's statement, during their "important meeting", Naqvi and Baker exchanged detailed views on the latest regional situation and discussed diplomatic efforts regarding the possible second round of US-Iran negotiations in Islamabad.

Naqvi commended US President Donald Trump's initiative to extend the ceasefire, calling it a "welcome development" that made significant progress towards reducing

tensions.

"We also hope for pos-

itive progress from Iran's side," the interior minister was quoted as saying.



The meeting emphasised the need for continuity in diplomatic channels for a lasting resolution to the conflict.

According to the ministry, the minister told Baker that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Chief of Defence Forces (CDF) Field Marshal Asim Munir were making "all-

out efforts at every level" to resolve the issue.

"It is hoped that both parties will give a chance to a diplomatic and peaceful solution," Naqvi said. Uncertainty has prevailed over the prospect of parleys, with the arrival of the US negotiators to Islamabad having been put off on Wednesday and no confirmation by Tehran about its participation.

The second round of negotiations has been

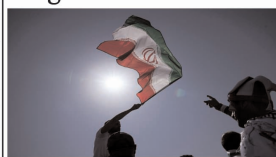
delayed due to continued friction between the two countries, particularly regarding Iran's closure of the Strait of Hormuz and the US blockade of Iran's ports.

As the ceasefire extension created space for further diplomacy, Trump on Wednesday hoped a second round of talks could take place within two to three days, despite persistent mistrust.

"It's possible!" Trump reportedly told the New York Post by text message, after the newspaper reached out to him to confirm whether the talks were "expected in Islamabad within the next 36 to 72 hours".

However, Iran's foreign ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei did not give a clear answer on resuming talks with the US.

## Iran offers to help ease Pakistan-Afghanistan tensions



PEAK POINT

TEHRAN: Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi has expressed Tehran's readiness to play a constructive role in reducing tensions between Pakistan and Afghanistan, stressing dialogue and regional cooperation as the only viable path toward stability, Tasnim News Agency reported. According to the report, Araghchi said Iran is prepared to assist both neighbouring countries in resolving their differences and urged continued diplomatic engagement to prevent further escalation.

He underscored that stability between Pakistan and Afghanistan is crucial for broader regional peace and security. Tensions between Pakistan and Afghanistan escalated into sustained cross-border hostilities.



# SPORTS



## Rawalpindiz secure maiden PSL 11 win with victory over Islamabad United



**PEAK POINT**

KARACHI: Rawalpindiz registered their first victory of the Pakistan Super League 11 season, defeating Islamabad United after a commanding all-round performance at the National Bank Stadium in Karachi on Thursday.

Chasing 138, Rawalpindiz reached the target in the 19th over, losing four wickets, thanks to a solid finishing effort from skipper Mohammad Rizwan and Kamran Ghulam.

The innings got off to a poor start as opener Abdullah Fazal was dismissed on the very first ball of the match for a duck.

Ghulam and Rizwan then steadied the innings with a composed partnership, easing the pressure as runs flowed freely. Their stand crossed the 50-run mark and helped take the team past the half-century total.

However, the 78-run partnership was broken when Chris Green struck, removing Kamran Ghulam, who played a fine knock of 42 off 30 deliveries, including five fours and one six.

Pindiz were reduced to three wickets when Shadab Khan dismissed Rizwan, who fought well for his 45 runs off 38 balls, featuring five fours and a six, leaving

the side at 92-3 in 12.5 overs.

The pressure continued as Sam Billings being run out at the non-striker's end for just two runs. Daryl Mitchell and Dian Forrester then guided Rawalpindiz to victory, with Mitchell remaining unbeaten on 32 off 25 balls, hitting two fours and a six, while Forrester contributed 13 runs to seal the win.

Batting first, the former champions were dismissed for 137 in their allotted 20 overs, as Rawalpindiz's bowling attack produced a standout display throughout the innings.

Islamabad United made a cautious start as openers Devon Conway and Sameer Minhas struggled to accelerate, with runs coming at a slow pace in the early overs. However, Mohammad Amir made the breakthrough on the second ball of the fifth over, dismissing Minhas for six off 11 balls, including one boundary, to end the 20-run opening partnership. United slipped further in the final over of the powerplay when Naseem Shah joined the attack and removed Mohammad Faiz for five off six deliveries, leaving Islamabad at 29-2 after 5.5 overs.

## Pakistan to open campaign against China in U-18 Asia Cup Hockey 2026



**PEAK POINT**

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan will begin its campaign in the Under-18 Asia Cup Hockey 2026 against China on May 30, according to the tournament schedule announced by the Asian Hockey Federation (AHF) on Thursday.

The event will be held from May 29 to June 6 in Kakamigahara, Japan, featuring top emerging teams from across Asia competing for the title. In the men's competition, nine teams have been divided into two pools. Pakistan is placed in Pool B alongside Malaysia, Bangladesh, and China, while Pool A consists of India, Korea, Japan, Chinese Taipei, and Kazakhstan. After their opening match, Pakistan will face Malaysia on May 31, before taking on Bangladesh in their final group fixture on June 3. As per the schedule, group-stage matches will continue until June 1, with the tournament progressing to the knockout phase thereafter. The semi-finals and classification matches will be played on June 5, while the final and third-place match are set for June 6. The Pakistan Hockey Federation (PHF) has undertaken comprehensive preparations, including nationwide trials and the holding of the Under-18 National Hockey Championship, which helped identify a strong pool of young talent.

## PSL 11: Warner, Khushdil help Karachi Kings cruise past Lahore Qalandars



**PEAK POINT**

LAHORE: A composed half-century from captain David Warner, supported by a late surge from Khushdil Shah, guided Karachi Kings to a five-wicket win over Lahore Qalandars in Pakistan Super League (PSL) 11 encounter at Lahore's Gaddafi Stadium on Thursday.

Set to chase a daunting 200-run target, the visitors knocked off the winning runs for the loss of five wickets and eight balls to spare to keep their playoff hopes alive.

The Kings got off to a shaky start to the pursuit as Ubaid Shah dismissed right-handed opener Jason Roy (nine) in the second over with just 10 runs

on the board. Warner then shared brief partnerships with Reeza Hendricks and Salman Ali Agha, who could contribute 10 and 14, respectively.

The skipper then received ample support from the other end in the form of Moeen Ali, and the experienced duo put together 58 runs at a brisk pace before Ubaid struck again, dismissing the latter, who made a 17-ball 39, laced with four sixes and a four.

The Kings then suffered another setback nine deliveries later as wicketkeeper Azam Khan, who scored 14 off eight balls, was cleaned up by Daniel Sams. His dismissal paved the way for Khushdil Shah to walk out and bat at No.7, and the left-handed batter turned the game on its head with belligerent hitting, the highlight of which was the pulsating 18th over, bowled by Shaheen Shah Afridi, which went for 23 runs. With just 11 runs required off 12 deliveries, Khushdil hit Haris Rauf for sixes back-to-back and steered the Kings over the line in the penultimate over. Khushdil remained unbeaten with a swashbuckling 14-ball 44, comprising five fours and two sixes, while Warner top-scored with 63 out from 44 deliveries, laced with 10 boundaries, including a six.

## Record-breaker Hamza Asif eyes Asian Beach Games glory in Sanya



## International stars dominate opening day of K2 Squash Women's 6K event

**PEAK POINT**

LAHORE: The K2 Squash PSA Women's Challenger 6K Championship 2026, presented by One World Squash, got underway in impressive fashion at K2 Squash Club, signalling another milestone for the venue as it hosts its second international tournament and its first-ever women's international squash championship. The tournament has attracted players from 13 countries, underlining its growing global stature and the increasing prominence of women's squash on the international stage. A total of eight matches were contested on the opening day, showcasing a high standard of play, intensity, and competitive spirit. Players delivered commanding performances, reflecting both technical excellence and physical endurance. The standout encounter of the day saw Korea's Jihyun Lee edge past Ecuador's Maria Moya in

a gripping five-game battle, the longest match of the round, lasting 51 minutes. Jihyun won the epic encounter by 3-2 (18-20, 11-9, 12-10, 6-11, 11-3) in 51 minutes. While Allie Stoddard (USA) [9/16] beat Busayo Olatunji (NGR) 3-0 (11-8, 11-4, 11-

Eva Maheshwari (USA) 3-0 (11-3, 11-6, 11-5) - 18 mins, Bo Ram Ryo (KOR) [9/16] beat Sameera Shahid (PAK) 3-0 (11-7, 11-6, 11-5) - 23 mins, Gabriella Csoke (HUN) [9/16] beat Nicole Friedman (USA) 3-0 (11-5, 11-4, 11-5) - 21 mins, Franka



1) - 23 mins, Elisabeth Ross (USA) beat Jiya Naik (USA) 3-0 (11-4, 11-2, 11-4) - 18 mins, Rose Lucas Marczuzo (FRA) [9/16] beat Alysa Ali (USA) 3-2 (11-6, 11-5, 8-11, 6-11, 11-9) - 41 mins. In other first round matches, Wen Li Lai (MAS) [9/16] beat

Vidović (CRO) beat Laila Tantawy (EGY) [9/16] 3-0 (11-0, 11-2, 11-0) - 17 mins. Tournament Director Muhammad Naveed Alam expressed his satisfaction with the level of competition and the successful start to the event.

## Pakistan U-16 squad departs for UEFA Development Tournament



**PEAK POINT**

LAHORE: The Pakistan U-16 Boys' National Team has officially departed for Kazakhstan to compete in the UEFA U-16 Boys Development Tournament 2026. This marks the first time in history that a

Stadium within the Shaheens" is as follows: Sports Complex, The 19-Kazakhstan, April 25: vs. member squad, meticulously scouted by the national coaching staff, left from Jinnah International Airport, Karachi, and is expected to arrive in Almaty tonight. The tournament features a high-caliber lineup, with Pakistan set to test their mettle against Kazakhstan, alongside footballing powerhouses Russia and Azerbaijan. The schedule for the "Young Gilani stated.



# Multilateral cooperation, effective diplomacy, and purposeful dialogue are indispensable for sustainable peace: NA Speaker

**ISLAMABAD:** Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, in his message on the occasion of the "International Day for Multilateralism and Diplomacy for Peace," said that this day serves as a reminder to the international community that sustainable peace can only be achieved through effective diplomacy, mutual trust, and result-oriented negotiations. He said that the prevailing global and

regional circumstances demand that nations promote dialogue, tolerance, and collective wisdom instead of confrontation and polarization. The Speaker stated that Pakistan has always placed the promotion of peace, stability, and international cooperation at the core of its foreign policy. He added that Pakistan has consistently played a responsible role at international and regional forums by prioritizing peaceful resolution of disputes, reconciliation, and multilateral

engagement. He noted that in the evolving global landscape, challenges such as climate change, economic instability, regional conflicts, and complex security threats have made a strong and effective multilateral system more essential than ever. Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq further stated that in light of recent tensions in the Middle East, Pakistan, as a responsible state, adopted a timely and effective diplomatic approach. He appreciated the statesmanship and

coordinated efforts of Prime Minister Mian Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister Senator Ishaq Dar, and Chief of Defence Forces Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir. He said that Pakistan played a positive and constructive role in de-escalating tensions and promoting dialogue between the concerned parties. He added that Pakistan's balanced and effective diplomatic efforts helped avert a potential large-scale conflict in the region

and reduced the risk of a serious global crisis. The Speaker emphasized that diplomacy and dialogue must be adopted for resolving differences, stating that the use of force does not resolve issues but instead creates further complications, whereas meaningful dialogue and respect for international law ensure lasting peace. He reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to continue playing its positive and active role, as a responsible state, in collaboration

with the international community for the promotion of peace, development, and stability. The Speaker added that Pakistan will continue its diplomatic efforts to strengthen multilateral cooperation, promote global harmony, and ensure peaceful resolution of disputes. He further stated that the peaceful resolution of the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir dispute and the Palestine issue is essential for lasting peace in the region.

## PIFD Faces PAC Scrutiny Over Rs9.35 Million Recovery Case and 28 Irregular Appointments

**ISLAMABAD:** A Public Accounts Committee session chaired by Syed Naveed Qamar has brought forward two serious audit objections against the Pakistan Institute of Fashion and Design, highlighting financial recovery issues and recruitment irregularities that raise broader concerns about governance and compliance within the institution. The most immediate concern revolves around a case of non-recovery of Rs9.35 million from an officer who proceeded on study leave abroad. Audit records show that Assistant Professor Faseeh Saleem was granted

four years of study leave on full pay to pursue PhD studies in Sweden. During this period, the institute paid him over Rs9.34 million in salary and allowances. However, the officer did not return after completion of the extended leave period, despite the requirement under institutional rules to serve the institute after completion of studies or repay the amount under a surety bond. Audit noted that despite clear provisions requiring recovery and disciplinary action in case of default, management did not initiate timely proceedings. This raised questions about enforcement of rules and safeguarding of public funds.

The Departmental Accounts Committee had earlier directed recovery of the amount and disciplinary action. Later, management claimed that recovery had been made and verified by audit, but the matter continued to draw scrutiny, with the PAC seeking a complete explanation of the overall position, including enforcement of bond conditions and accountability for delays in action. Alongside the financial case, a second major audit observation has brought recruitment practices at the institute under the spotlight. Audit revealed that 28 employees were appointed on regular and contract basis during 2023-24 without

observing mandatory provincial, regional and gender quotas required under federal government recruitment rules. The appointments included 8 lecturers, 9 teaching associates, 1 deputy director, 1 assistant treasurer, 1 administrator, technical staff and support staff including attendants and a gardener, taking the total to 28 positions. Audit declared these appointments irregular, stating that they were made in violation of established quota requirements meant to ensure fair representation across regions and categories. When questioned, management responded that positions were later advertised on a

quota basis but claimed that candidates from other provinces did not apply. This explanation was not accepted by the DAC, which pointed out that quota-reserved positions had already been filled without compliance, making the process fundamentally flawed. The committee subsequently directed a formal fact-finding inquiry with defined terms of reference to establish responsibility and ensure transparency. In follow up proceedings, the matter escalated further as the audit insisted that the inquiry should be conducted at the ministry level rather than internally, reflecting concerns about impartiality. The

DAC ultimately recommended the formation of a committee to complete the inquiry within a limited timeframe and submit findings for review. The twin audit paras have now placed the institute under renewed scrutiny, with the PAC expected to seek detailed clarification from the Principal Accounting Officer on both the recovery case and the recruitment process. The issues underline recurring challenges in enforcement of service rules, financial accountability and transparent hiring practices in public sector institutions.

# Opinion & Editorial


  
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## How it ends

**Khurram Husain**  
It took five years of negotiations to end the Vietnam War. The Paris Accords were signed in January 1973 by a beleaguered presidential administration after five years of negotiations that had begun in 1968. The most important breakthroughs along the way occurred in the secret talks held between Henry Kissinger and Le Duc Tho who represented the Viet Cong. There were 68 rounds of these secret talks that Kissinger describes in his memoirs, and the one thing to take away from it is how meticulous, exacting and diabolically complicated these kinds of talks can be. Of course, there are key differences between then and now. That war dragged on for years, had close to a million combatants (all told) from both sides, tens of thousands of Vietnamese prisoners exchanged for hundreds of American ones, and the talks involved four sides. This war is less than two months in, has seen no ground engagements save for a limited operation, has no prisoners, and only two sides that need to be brought together for an agreement. This makes the diplomacy somewhat less complicated. But even then, it is a good idea to not underestimate the task at hand. My main concern here is that the Iranians have not yet made a clear demonstration of their leverage in this war, and for that reason, may not be ready to make a deal just

yet. Their main leverage is economic, and the real impact of that is yet to be felt. It is possible they want the real impact of their actions to hit the markets first before they feel they are ready, and that would be at least a few weeks if not a few months away. Until then, the status quo suits them fine. Some early signs of the arrival of the economic catastrophe they are trying to bring about have begun to emerge. Oil inventories around the world are nearing depletion point. Oil on water cargoes, the oil that is en route to any given destination, are also collapsing. The first sign of physical shortages landing on shore in our country came last week when prolonged loadshedding was undertaken around the country due to LNG shortages. But the liquid fuel markets in our country have been kept running due to timely pricing actions by the government, and a little help from our oil-rich friends who have ensured that Pakistan-bound vessels continue getting supplies from ports like Yanbu and Fujairah that are otherwise seeing a crush of buyers. The Iranians have not yet made a clear demonstration of their leverage in this war. Bangladesh has had to shut four out of five of its fertiliser plants to divert their gas towards power generation. Lines at pumps are now being reported to be as long as 1.5 kilometres in some cases, and just this week they had their first few fatalities

from fights that broke out at these pumps as motorists fought with each other over priority access amid a fuel rationing scheme the government has had to roll out. Sri Lanka has revived its post-default QR code scheme to ration fuel. App-based businesses are now coming up offering people who will wait on your behalf in the 10-12 hour long queues at fuel stations. In Sri Lanka, soldiers have been deployed in some fuel stations to maintain order. The Philippines have called up 98,000 police personnel for fuel station duty. Thailand is seeing smuggling as fuel suppliers find ways to evade government price caps. Across Asia, the signs of a fuel supply chain breaking down are emerging. Europe is not far behind, where stocks of jet fuel are depleting faster than any other category and panic buying is breaking out in some parts. So far the disruption from the war has mainly affected prices in the oil markets. But we are now transitioning to where the physical shortages of oil will start landing. That is when the crisis really begins. In addition, the Gulf economies seem to be facing difficulties of their own, but due to the opaque nature of governance, they are thus far papering these over. Qatar floated a \$3 billion emergency bond recently, most likely to be able to honour the large-scale withdrawals its banking system is seeing. Courtesy Dawn

## From Pulwama to Pahalgam

**Durdana Najam**  
There is an emerging tendency in Indian strategic discourse to interpret the period from the 2019 Pulwama attack to the 2025 Pahalgam incident as evidence of a "new strategic normal" in South Asia. The argument suggests that India has altered deterrence dynamics, imposed calibrated costs on Pakistan, and reshaped the regional balance through a combination of limited military strikes, sustained diplomatic pressure, and internal restructuring in Jammu and Kashmir. But from a Pakistani perspective - and increasingly even from within serious strategic scholarship - this narrative does not hold up. What has actually emerged over the last several years is not a transformed regional order, but a crisis cycle, where escalation substitutes for strategy and messaging replaces resolution. At the centre of this shift is what is often described as the Modi-era doctrine, associated with Narendra Modi. It rests on a simple assumption: that military force, diplomatic pressure and domestic narrative control can together coerce Pakistan into compliance while reshaping Kashmir internally. The problem is not ambition - it is the gap between ambition and outcome. That gap became visible almost immediately after Pulwama. India's 2019 airstrikes in Balakot were projected as proof that geography no longer constrained retaliation and that a "new normal" had arrived. Yet the strategic literature that followed was far more cautious. Ashley Tellis of the Carnegie Endowment has argued that limited military strikes rarely generate a lasting coercive effect in nuclear environments, because adversaries adapt rather than capitulate. Similarly, Indian strategist Sumit Ganguly has warned that such exchanges increase the risk of miscalculation rather than delivering control. Even within India, Pravin Sawhney has described Balakot as exposing a deeper problem: the widening gap between political messaging and operational military reality. Courtesy Tribune

## Floods and lost jobs

A part from the immediate impact on human life and infrastructure, the 2025 floods also had a lasting impact on the job market, washing away some 3.3 million jobs, according to the ILO. This staggering figure is yet another illustration of how much Pakistan has to suffer because of a problem that it has played almost no role in creating - climate change. Meanwhile, the US, which historically has had the worst impact on the environment, is led by a man who claims climate change isn't real and whose desire to wage war on windmills rivals Don Quixote. But the problem isn't isolated to the climate denier in chief. Even countries that have made massive investments in their own climate preparedness regularly fail to follow through when asked to compensate the victims of their past policies with investments in these developing countries' mitigation infrastructure. This leaves Pakistan and other victims of the developed world's abuse of the environment to fend for themselves. Despite some initial post-disaster assistance focused on relief activities, foreign aid usually dries up once the immediate effects of the disaster have been addressed. Unfortunately, just because the flood water has receded and people have begun returning home, it does not mean life goes back to normal.

## Women's empowerment key to Pakistan's Digital transformation: Shaza Fatima



PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication, Shaza Fatima Khawaja, on Thursday underscored that Pakistan's economic progress and digital transformation are closely tied to the empowerment and inclusion of women, who constitute nearly half of the country's population.

Addressing an event, the minister described information technology as a "great equalizer" capable of bridging gender disparities and expanding

economic opportunities. She stressed that no meaningful roadmap for national development can be envisioned without integrating women into all sectors, particularly the digital economy. Highlighting the policy direction, she said the government is actively promoting women's participation in the technology sector—traditionally perceived as male-dominated—reflecting growing confidence in women's leadership and capabilities. She added that despite social challenges and dual responsi-

bilities at home and work, women in Pakistan are steadily advancing and setting new benchmarks across industries.

The minister pointed out that over one million young people have been trained in digital skills over the past two years under initiatives such as DigiSkills.pk and Ignite. Women currently account for around 36 percent of enrolment in certain programmes, with ongoing efforts to achieve gender parity. She further shared that approximately 300,000 individuals are presently enrolled in DigiSkills programmes, with women's participation steadily approaching 50 percent. Similarly, women's representation in National Incubation Centers has crossed 35 percent, with plans to expand it further. Emphasising the transformative potential of the ICT sector, the minister said digital platforms offer flexible work opportunities, enabling women to overcome traditional barriers through remote employment, entrepreneurship, and online education.

## IPP announces nine candidates, finalizes strategy for GB elections

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: The Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party (IPP) on Thursday finalized its electoral strategy for the upcoming Gilgit-Baltistan elections and announced candidates for nine seats in the first phase. The decisions were taken at a meeting of the party's 20-member Electoral Board chaired by its President Abdul Aleem Khan, held here to review preparations for the June 7 polls, said a press release. Accordingly, the names of Maulana Sultan Rais, Fatahullah Khan, Captain (r) Shafi Ullah Khan, Emaan Shah and Raja Jalal Hussain were finalized while Shams-ul-Haq Lone, Haji Shah Baig, Haji Gulbar Khan and Khan Akbar Khan will also be entitled for IPP tickets. The Party's Election Board is expected to announce the remaining candidates for the other constituencies within the next few days. IPP President Abdul Aleem Khan stated that consultations have been decided upon regarding a possible electoral alliance between Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party and Islamic Tehreek Pakistan in the Gilgit-Baltistan general elections. Moreover, the Party's future course of action will also be determined in view of the strategies of other

political parties. The meeting also decided that the Party would soon finalize the names of its candidates for the 9 Reserved Seats for Women and Technocrats.

Abdul Aleem Khan said Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party is participating in the Gilgit-Baltistan elections in a strong and effective manner, adding that IPP Members of the National and Provincial Assemblies, senior leaders and Party members will undertake an election tour of Gilgit-Baltistan next week.

During the Election Board meeting chaired by Party President Abdul Aleem Khan, the senior leadership of the Party briefed participants on the electoral situation of Gilgit-Baltistan so far. Members of the National Assembly Aun Chaudhry and Gul Asghar Baghur joined the meeting via video link while MNA Munnaza Hassan attended in person. Also present at the meeting were IPP Central Secretary General Mian Khalid Mahmood, Punjab President Rana Nazir Ahmad Khan, Central Secretary Information Syed Samsam Ali Bukhari, Punjab Assembly Member Ghazanfar Abbas Chhina and Lahore President Malik Zaman Naseeb.



ISLAMABAD: Gilgit-Baltistan Elections; Electoral Board of Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party held meeting chaired by Central President Abdul Aleem Khan.

## Railways Minister condoles demise of Pir Moeen-ul-Haq Gilani's mother

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Railways Muhammad Hanif Abbasi on Thursday expressed deep grief and sorrow over the demise of the mother of Pir Syed Moeen-ul-Haq Gilani of Golra Sharif.

In his condolence message, the minister extended heartfelt sympathies and complete solidarity with the bereaved family during their time of grief.

He prayed for the departed soul, asking Almighty Allah to grant her forgiveness, elevate her ranks, and bless her with a high place in Jannat-ul-Firdous.

Hanif Abbasi also prayed for patience and strength for the grieving family, saying may Allah grant them courage to bear this irreparable loss.

He said the death of a mother is a profound and irreplaceable loss, the void of which is felt for a long time.

The minister further prayed that the deceased be showered with Allah's mercy and granted eternal peace.

## Energy minister orders halt to power purchases above least-cost benchmark

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Energy Awaiz Leghari has directed an immediate halt to electricity purchases exceeding the national least-cost benchmark.

The power minister also initiated an inquiry into distribution companies (Discos) allegedly buying power from small and captive plants at tariffs above the permitted rates.

Leghari passed these directives after a review found Discos drawing power from Small Power Producers (SPPs) and Captive Power Plants (CPPs) outside the prescribed economic merit order, potentially inflating consumer costs.

He directed utilities to immediately discontinue the practice and align all procurement with rules set by the National Electric



Power Regulatory Authority (Nepra), including its Grid and Distribution Codes.

The minister ordered a formal inquiry to determine responsibility and ensure accountability, while instructing Discos to coordinate with the Independent System and Market Operator (ISMO) to integrate SPPs and CPPs strictly under Economic Merit Order (EMO) principles, dispatching generation based on the lowest incremental cost.

In a follow-up directive, the Power Division barred any off-merit electricity procurement.

## Reading culture must be promoted among youth: Wajiha

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Federal Education and Professional Training Ms Wajiha Qamar, emphasized that books are a timeless source of knowledge, awareness and cultural heritage, playing a fundamental role in the intellectual development of nation. In her message on World Book Day, she paid tribute to Pakistan's writers, authors, and teachers for their invaluable contributions toward promoting education and enlightenment in society. She said in today's digital age, while access to information has become easier than ever, the importance of meaningful reading has grown even more. Books foster critical thinking, creativity, and informed decision-making—



essential qualities for building a responsible and aware society.

The Minister stressed the need to promote a reading culture among the youth. She highlighted that ensuring access to quality books, strengthening libraries, and improving educational resources are key priorities to provide students with a constructive and knowledge-friendly environment. The government remains committed to advancing literacy, improving access to knowledge.

## BISP Chairperson calls for promoting reading culture on World Book, Copyright Day

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Chairperson Benazir Income Support Programme, Senator Rubina Khalid Thursday emphasized the importance of books as the foundation of knowledge, awareness and societal development.

In her message on World Book and Copyright Day, the chairperson stated that the progress of any society depends on the promotion of education and reading habits, stressing that fostering a love for books among the younger generation is the need of the hour. Highlighting the role of knowledge in addressing socio-economic challenges, she said education remains the most



effective tool to eliminate poverty and backwardness. Rubina Khalid underlined that women's education and reading are key to ensuring their empowerment and autonomy, adding that the Benazir Income Support Programme is committed to promoting awareness and education among underprivileged women. She said that the vision of "a book in every home.

## Digital audit system implemented in 30 field offices across Pakistan

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: The government has completed the implementation of the Audit Management Information System (AMIS) in 30 field audit offices across Pakistan, marking a major step towards digitizing the public sector audit system.

According to official documents available with Wealth Pakistan, all audit teams in field offices are now actively using the system, reflecting a full transition from manual to digital audit processes and achieving 100 percent progress in AMIS deployment.

Importantly, all audits conducted through AMIS are now risk-based, enhancing audit quality by focusing on high-risk areas and improving resource allocation. This shift is expected to strengthen transparency and effectiveness within the auditing framework.

Alongside digitization, the government has made notable progress in capacity building. As part of the initiative, 3,083 audit staff members have been trained in new and emerging areas of auditing, achieving 88 percent of



the overall target of 3,500. The training programme focuses on equipping auditors with modern skills to improve efficiency, transparency, and accountability

in public financial management.

In another key development, the government has exceeded its target for developing a pool of certified

auditors. Against the planned 800 auditors, a total of 947 have been trained, achieving 118 percent progress. These include certifications in professional accountancy qualifications and specialized diplomas.

The training modules covered a wide range of technical areas, including International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS), the use of data analytic tools such as Qlik Sense, as well as thematic and risk-based auditing techniques. A total of 478 officials were trained in IPSAS,

248 in Qlik Sense, and 146 in thematic audits, indicating a comprehensive and diversified approach to skill development.

The reforms are part of broader efforts to modernize governance structures and strengthen oversight mechanisms. The integration of technology with human resource development is expected to improve audit performance and support evidence-based policymaking.

The progress highlights the government's continued commitment to institutional reforms aimed at ensuring