



At Asean moot, Dar highlights Kashmir dispute, Gulf crisis as core threats to regional peace



Aurangzeb reviews reform progress with IMF senior management



Salik launches landmark immigration policy to protect Overseas Pakistanis

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PM Shehbaz for aligning population planning with economic stability

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday emphasized the urgent need to align population planning with national development, economic stability, and human resource improvement, calling for enhanced provincial coordination and effective public awareness campaigns to control population growth. Chairing a high-level meeting regarding population welfare in the country, PM Shehbaz Sharif said that rapidly growing population was the country's biggest challenge and measures for population control and welfare must be treated as a national duty. Calling the balance in population a sole guarantor for sustainable national development, he directed authorities to convene a

meeting of the National Population Council at the earliest. During the meeting, the relevant officials briefed the prime minister on the country's demographic trends, population welfare initiatives, and preparations for the National Population Council meeting.

It was informed that the council's meeting would be convened soon, bringing together the chief ministers of all provinces, Gilgit-Baltistan, the prime minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, and representatives of all relevant institutions and stakeholders to formulate a comprehensive national strategy.

It was told that the operating procedures for the National Population Council Secretariat have been finalized, and the National Stabilization Plan 2026-2035.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a review meeting on Population development and stabilization.

CDF Munir vows to defeat foreign-backed proxies' nefarious designs in Balochistan

PEAK POINT



RAWALPINDI: Chief of Defence Forces (CDF) and Chief of Army Staff (COAS) Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir on Thursday resolved to defeat foreign-sponsored proxies' nefarious designs in Balochistan with "decisive response", saying consistent efforts of security forces would bring lasting peace to the province.

The army chief made the remarks while interacting with participants of the 20th National Workshop Balochistan at General Headquarters in Rawalpindi, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said in a statement. Addressing the participants, CDF Munir said that consistent efforts of security forces and law enforcement agencies, backed by the steadfast support of the people would bring lasting peace to Balochistan.

The army chief reaffirmed that targeted operations against Fitna al-Khawarij and Fitna al-Hindustan would continue with full resolve until the menace of terrorism and its abettors are eliminated from Pakistan, the ISPR said.

Houthis attack Saudi tankers in Red Sea as US strikes Iran for 12th consecutive day

PEAK POINT



SAUDI ARABIA: Hostilities in the Middle East flared on Thursday as the Yemen's Houthis said that they attacked two Saudi Arabian oil tankers in a military operation, while the United States carried out strikes in Iran for a 12th consecutive night. A Saudi news agency confirmed one of the two vessels was ablaze

after an assault while sailing in the Red Sea. The Saudi Arabian state news agency SPA, citing an official source at the General Transport Authority, said an attack caused a fire on the bow of the tanker Encelia but all crew members were safe. SPA did not say who had targeted the vessel. Authorities have secured the vessel and its crew and taken measures to protect the marine environment, describing the attack as a violation of international law, SPA reported, citing the source. In their statement, the Houthis said they attacked two tankers, the Encelia and Layla, saying the vessels had violated a naval blockade imposed by the group on Saudi Arabia in the Red Sea. The Houthis said they targeted the tankers with a number of ballistic and cruise missiles as well as drones. A maritime security source said earlier on Thursday that the Encelia had transmitted a distress call via VHF radio, reporting it had been struck by a missile while operating at the outer port limits of Saudi Arabia's Jizan, in the Red Sea, and was on fire. The British maritime risk-management group Vanguard also said the Saudi-flagged tanker Encelia was struck by an unknown projectile on its starboard side about 130 km southwest of Saudi Arabia's Al Shuqaiq at 2000 GMT.

Iran warns US troops against carrying out 'manifestly unlawful' orders

PEAK POINT



TEHRAN: Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmaeil Baghaei warned US service members on Thursday against carrying out orders to attack civilian infrastructure, saying such actions could amount to war crimes. In a post on the US social media platform X, Baghaei said citing superior orders does not absolve individuals of criminal responsibility for war crimes. "Do Not Commit War Crimes for Anyone; citing superior orders to justify war crimes does not absolve the perpetrators of criminal liability." "A policy that calls for the destruction of bridges and power plants is manifestly unlawful and criminal. It constitutes reprisal and collective punishment," he said. Baghaei also cited US domestic law, including the War Crimes Act, as well as military legal standards requiring service members to refuse "manifestly unlawful orders." US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said on Thursday that the United States' primary focus is "a denuclearised Iran." "They cannot have nuclear weapons. I mean, imagine what they would do to the world."

Sessions judge, his guard killed after vehicles targeted en route to Mastung

PEAK POINT

QUETTA: District and Sessions Judge Abdul Hakeem Kakar and his guard were gunned down on Thursday, while another judge was among two injured when they came under attack while heading to Mastung, officials said. Judge Kakar and Additional Sessions Judge Tariq Lashari were on their way to Mastung from Quetta when unknown armed men attacked the vehicles they were in, Balochistan Home Department's aide Babar Yousafzai told the media persons.

Pakistan 'disappointed' with EU report on GSP+ compliance issues, says it understates reforms

ARIF MEHMOOD KHAN

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Thursday expressed "disappointment" with the European Union's (EU) recent report that pointed out issues in Pakistan's compliance with its commitments under the Generalised Scheme of Preferences Plus (GSP+). The report was issued last week as part of the European Commission's global assessment of the GSP during the 2023-2025 period. It said Pakistan had "regressed in a number of areas while positive change was limited". Responding to a query during a weekly press briefing on Thursday, Foreign Office (FO) spokesper-



son Tahir Andrabi appreciated the report's "acknowledgement of Pakistan's legislative progress" and its continued compliance with 27 international conventions under the GSP+. "Nevertheless, I would be remiss if I do not express disappointment with the assessment, with the report's overall narrative which does not present sufficiently balanced pictures of Pakistan's performance," Andrabi

participation, poverty reduction and broader economic development".

He observed that GSP+ was a "mutually beneficial arrangement in that aspect".

"We will remain constructively engaged with the European Commission and other EU institutions and remain committed to the effective implementation of international conventions underpinning the GSP framework," Andrabi affirmed.

He highlighted that beyond GSP+, Pakistan's EU cooperation extended to development, migration, counterterrorism, regional stability, climate resilience, connectivity and many other areas.

Pakistan hits back at India's attempt to 'distort facts', says holding IWT in abeyance 'simply illegal'

MAHPARA ZAMAN

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Thursday rejected India's attempt to "distort facts" about the Indus Water Treaty (IWT) at a United Nations



Security Council (UNSC) open debate, saying that New Delhi's actions in the aftermath of the attack in occupied Kashmir's Pulwama were "simply illegal".

At a UNSC debate on natural resource governance, Pakistan's Permanent Representation to the UN Asim Iftikhar Ahmad had highlighted India's unilateral decision to hold the treaty in abeyance, saying that "no state should be permitted to abuse shared water resources as an instrument of coercion or political pressure, much less when it breaches solemn treaty obligations". Subsequently, India's Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador Harish Parvathaneni had accused Pakistan of "state-sponsored cross-border terrorism", saying that it had "eroded the basis for bilateral cooperation on the treaty", according to Indian news agency ANI. He had also asserted New Delhi's claim on occupied Kashmir.



SPORTS



Gull, Sidra fifties lead Pakistan to 5-wicket win in opening ODI against Sri Lanka



PEAK POINT

HAMBANTOTA: Gull Feroza and Sidra Amin scored half-centuries as Pakistan overhauled the 211-run target against Sri Lanka in the opening One-Day International of the three-match series with five wickets and 42 balls remaining here at the Mahinda Rajapaksa International Cricket Stadium, Hambantota on Thursday.

With this win Fatima Sana-lead Pakistan have now won five consecutive ODIs in the ICC Women's Championship 2025-29 having played seven matches and are placed second on the table

besides New Zealand.

In pursuit of the target, Pakistan's opening duo of Gull and Sadaf Shamas got their team off to a positive start by putting on a 58-run stand in 9.5 overs. Sadaf fell to Chamari Athapaththu for 20 off 27 having hit three fours in her outing.

Player of the match Gull, who continued her impressive run of form with fourth consecutive fifty-plus score, continued to press on in the company of Sidra Amin as the duo put Sri Lanka bowlers under pressure for 19 overs. They stitched together a valuable 90-run stand pulling the sting out of the

chase.

In the course, Gull completed her fifty of 47 balls in the 20th over before falling for a fluent 77-ball 78 (11 fours) in the 29th over. She was pinned leg-before by Kavisha Dilhari, who later also accounted for Muneeba Ali. Sidra completed her fifty off 84 balls with a boundary in the 33rd over. In tandem with Ayesha Zafar, she added 36 runs off 45 balls for the third wicket. Sri Lanka showed some resistance by taking three for 22 between overs 37 and 43 but in vain.

Inoka Ranaweera bowled Sidra for 57 – her 17th WODI fifty,

Dilhari removed Muneeba Ali for one, while Najiba went after scoring 13 off 17 balls. Ayesha Zafar remained unbeaten for 27 off 31 balls with the help of a four and a six, while Fatima Sana hit a boundary before the winning run came in the form of a wide.

Earlier, Pakistan were put in the field by Sri Lanka and they came back well after conceding two fifty-plus stands and didn't let any Sri Lanka batter score an individual half-century as Athapaththu and Nilakshika scored 46 each. Sri Lanka went from 109 for 1 to 210-9, adding 101 runs for eight wickets.

Arshad Nadeem set for Glasgow Commonwealth Games javelin event



PEAK POINT

GLASGOW: Pakistan's star javelin thrower Arshad Nadeem will compete at the 2026 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow, where he is set to defend his men's javelin title.

Ben Warrington, head of the British High Commission's Lahore office, shared a video with Nadeem on social media, showing the Olympic gold medalist training for the Games at Punjab Stadium.

In the video, Nadeem is also seen giving Warrington a brief javelin lesson and explaining the correct grip for the throw.

Warrington wished the Pakistani athlete success at the Commonwealth Games and highlighted his role as one of the country's leading sports figures.

"Best of luck Arshad Nadeem! Pakistan's Olympic gold medalist is at the 2026 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow to defend his men's javelin champion title," Warrington wrote in an Instagram post.

He added that Nadeem would carry Pakistan's flag at the opening ceremony, before signing off with the Glaswegian expression, "Gie it laldy," meaning to give it everything. Nadeem is scheduled to compete in the men's javelin throw event on August 1.

Pakistan to tour England for five-match ODI series ahead of World Cup



PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan cricket team will tour England next year ahead of the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup 2027 for a five-match One-Day International (ODI) series, the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) announced on Thursday.

The series will begin on May 15 in Southampton, followed by matches in Manchester on May 19, Leeds on May 21, Africa, Zimbabwe Chester-le-Street on May 23 and Cardiff on May 26. The PCB said that Pakistan are currently ranked fifth in the ICC Men's ODI rankings, while England are seventh.

Before the 2027 ODI tour, Pakistan are set to visit England next month for a three-match Test series from 19 August to 13 September.

Pakistan last played an ODI series in England in 2021, where Babar Azam finished as the leading run-scorer with 177 runs, including a brilliant 158 in the third ODI.

Series Schedule
15 May: 1st ODI – Southampton
19 May: 2nd ODI – Manchester
21 May: 3rd ODI – Leeds
23 May: 4th ODI – Chester-le-Street
26 May: 5th ODI – Cardiff.

Pakistan to tour England next year for 5-match ODI series



UN recognition strengthens Pakistan's football diplomacy and global social impact

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: The international recognition earned by Pakistan's "Football for Mental Health Programme" at the United Nations has been hailed as a major milestone for Pakistan's sporting diplomacy, reinforcing the country's positive image while strengthening its standing within the global football community.

Officials associated with the initiative believe the acknowledgement has gone beyond celebrating a successful social programme, instead highlighting Pakistan's growing ability to contribute meaningfully to international discussions on youth development, mental well-being and community empowerment through sport.

The recognition has also reinforced the Pakistan Football Federation's (PFF) belief in the unity of the global football family, demon-

strating that football continues to transcend geographical, cultural and political boundaries by bringing together nations in pursuit of common humanitarian goals. PFF President Syed Mohsen Gilani described the

ceived ideas focusing on building a better society by using football as a vehicle," he said. Gilani added that the international appreciation had projected Pakistan's soft image before the world by showcasing the country's



achievement as a significant endorsement of Pakistan's potential to transform football into an instrument of social progress. "It proved that Pakistani people have the will and ability to serve society, while the Pakistan Football Federation possesses the professional capacity to implement globally con-

commitment to innovation, social responsibility and community development through sport. According to the PFF president, one of the most significant outcomes of the initiative was its emphasis on mental health, an issue receiving increasing attention across the global sporting landscape.



ISLAMABAD: Players of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan battle for a point during the match of the CAVA Men's Volleyball Championship 2026 at Liaquat Gymnasium, Pakistan Sports Complex.



Pakistan faces growing flood threat as senate warns of massive losses and weak control system

NADEEM TANOLI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's flood protection system has come under scrutiny after a Senate committee was informed that the country's existing dams can control only around 20 percent of flood flows, raising concerns over the ability to protect people and infrastructure from increasing flood disasters. The Senate Standing Committee on Water Resources expressed concern over the growing threat of floods, water shortages and billions of rupees in damage caused every year. The committee, chaired by Senator Jam Saifullah Khan Dharejo, warned that repeated floods have become a major national challenge and demanded a

long term plan to improve flood control, early warnings and emergency response. The Federal Flood Commission (FFC) informed the committee that low flood conditions were currently being observed at Tarbela, Chashma and Nowshera, while a major increase in water flow was reported in the Chenab River. Officials told the committee that around 275,000 cusecs of water were flowing in the Chenab, creating the possibility of high flood levels at Marala. High flood risks were also expected upstream of Mangla on the Jhelum River and in the Kabul River. The committee was briefed about flood predictions, river water movement

timings and flash flood incidents reported in different areas. Senators raised concerns over reports of water releases from Indian dams and stressed the need for stronger monitoring systems to protect Pakistan from sudden increases in river flows. Officials explained that Pakistan needs better forecasting systems because existing reservoirs alone cannot stop major flooding. The committee discussed using modern technology, including artificial intelligence based forecasting tools, weather radars, river flow models and GLOF monitoring systems to improve flood warnings. Members supported the creation of a central flood monitoring dashboard

that would combine information from federal and provincial departments. The proposed system would help authorities receive early warnings, track dangerous situations and coordinate rescue operations more effectively. The committee also decided to visit the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) in its next meeting to examine the country's flood monitoring and emergency command system. Irrigation officials from Punjab and Sindh briefed the committee on preparations and monitoring of vulnerable areas. The chairman directed the irrigation secretaries of both provinces to personally attend the next meeting and

provide updates on flood protection measures. Pakistan Railways informed the committee that 149 vulnerable points had been identified across the railway network. Officials said protective measures had been taken and these locations were being monitored continuously to prevent damage to railway operations. The chairman also expressed disappointment over the absence of the Meteorological Department during the meeting. He stressed that weather experts must participate in future discussions because accurate weather information is critical for predicting floods and saving lives. The NDMA briefed the committee about evacuation opera-

tions in Shakargarh following flood-related incidents the previous night. Officials informed members that 15 people lost their lives in those incidents. Senator Jam Saifullah Khan Dharejo said Pakistan faces repeated floods, water shortages and infrastructure destruction, causing huge financial losses and affecting millions of people. He said the country needed a complete flood management strategy based on past experiences and future planning. The committee decided that the next meeting would focus on preparing a detailed roadmap for flood control, including better warning systems, emergency planning and construction measures.

Only nine of 372 Peca cases shifted to NCCIA, Senate panel told

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: The Senate Standing Committee on Information and Broadcasting was informed on Thursday that only nine of around 372 eligible cases nationwide have so far been transferred to the National Cyber Crime Investigation Agency despite amendments to the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (Peca), 2025, granting the agency exclusive authority to investigate offences under the law. Briefing the committee, chaired by Senator Samad

Ali, NCCIA official said provincial police continued to retain the vast majority of Peca cases despite the amended law requiring investigations to be handed over to the agency once offences under the act were invoked in a first information report (FIR). According to the agency, a province-wise breakdown showed 19 Peca-related cases registered in Islamabad, 268 in Punjab, 47 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 21 in Sindh, seven in Balochistan, 10 in Azad Jammu and Kashmir, and none in Gilgit-Baltistan. However, officials said



only nine cases — all transferred by Sindh Police — had so far been formally handed over to the NCCIA for investigation. The agency maintained that once Peca provisions were included in an FIR, provincial police no longer had the legal authority to investigate the matter and were required to transfer the case to the NCCIA. Officials said provincial authorities had informed the

agency that the remaining transfers were still under process. Senator Waqar Mehdi questioned why under-trial Peca cases pending before courts had also not been shifted to the NCCIA despite earlier directions issued by the committee. He said provincial prosecution departments and advocate generals should explain why the pending cases had yet to be transferred. Responding to the query, the NCCIA official reiterated that police lost investigative jurisdiction immediately after Peca provisions were applied to a case,

comparing the arrangement to offences under the Anti-Terrorism Act, which are investigated by the Counter-Terrorism Department rather than ordinary police. Following the discussion, committee chairman Senator Samad Ali directed that fresh instructions be issued to provincial inspectors general of police, advocate generals and other relevant authorities to transfer all pending Peca cases to the NCCIA and explain the reasons for delays in implementing the committee's earlier directions.

Opinion & Editorial

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Vibes for talks

The optimism exhibited by the warring sides pledging their faith in diplomacy offers a ray of hope in adversity. Secretary of State Marco Rubio's assertion that Washington is ready to talk things out with Tehran - provided the Islamic Republic gives up its nuclear obsession and refrains from exercising hegemony over the Strait of Hormuz - could be a solid beginning for a return to the negotiating table. Likewise, Supreme Leader Syed Mojtaba Khamenei's observation that a 'no war, no peace' status quo is unwarranted provides enough common ground for the adversaries to silence their guns and give diplomacy a chance. The prerequisite, nonetheless, as stated by Pakistan and Qatar, is to return to the July 6 modus operandi and allow the good offices of mediators to resume fence-mending exercises in the wider interest of peace and security. The ongoing conflict, which stands in utter violation of the 60-day ceasefire agreed between the warring sides, must come to an end. The way forward for Iran and the US is to focus on the broader picture of reconciliation - particularly the dividends it will yield for global stability. Tehran's decision to strike Bahrain, Kuwait and Jordan with missiles in retaliation for Washington's trigger-happiness is proving disastrous.

Democratic disconnect

Basil Nabi Malik
THROUGHOUT our history, we have played around with varying notions of democracy, dictatorship, autocracy, and despotism, mixing and matching these formulas with presidential and parliamentary systems to create a much sought-after hybrid model. These models have wreaked chronic instability, often changing with a greater frequency than people tend to change their cars, houses and, in some cases, jobs. Ironically, amid these constant changes, instability has remained the only real constant underpinning Pakistan governance landscape.

Behind these changes have been arguments regarding the inefficiencies of the existing model, the failure of alternatives, or changed socioeconomic circumstances. Whatever the reason, objective, or deficiency identified, one truth has remained: the tendency to sway from one extreme to another because of a consistent state of impatience. What this means is that no matter what model we apply — and then declare a failure — the underlying motivation for doing this again and again is our persistent refusal to fully commit to a solution and give it the time it needs to produce results.

Those in power do not have the patience to let the people decide, air their grievances, or make any meaningful contribution to the governance models the

rules extol unless they wholly align with their worldview. Nor do they have the patience to allow institutions — which will sometimes overreach and at others course correct — to develop organically and settle into an equilibrium that serves as an effective system of checks and balances against executive excesses. The people, on the other hand, grow impatient on being disenfranchised, ie, when their voices are restricted, rights curtailed and participation denied. They grow disillusioned, frustrated and eventually angry.

In a nutshell, those in power do not have the patience to endure the long periods of democratic continuity required for democracy to bear fruit, whereas the governed do not have the patience to endure autocratic and non-representative tendencies that deprive them of the use of their voice in determining their own future.

Those in power do not have the patience to let the people decide.

The fundamental state of impatience is apparent. But what is not is what we have achieved in these 78-odd years by refusing to abandon it. Unfortunately, when governments continue to oscillate between democratic representation and autocratic rule, and dismiss the people's voice as irrelevant, it raises questions about the state's legitimacy and writ. This should be obvious here. Apparently, it is not. Astonishingly, the state is yet

to understand that legitimacy is derived not from the people running the system but from the people for whom the system to govern is being developed. States tend to fare better against existential threats, internal security challenges, and external disturbances in the worst of democratic times than the best of autocratic rule. This is because a system which gives ownership to the people is owned by the people against anyone threatening it. And when do people take ownership? When they have a stake in the system, a say in its running, the power to influence it, and the protection of the rule of law. When the system represents the people, their interests, and their aspirations, they view the state as an extension of themselves rather than something inimical. Granted, certain people will always have grievances. However, a democratic system allows all segments of society to influence state policy. As such, their grievances, even if substantial, are more likely to be channelled through non-violent means. When an aggrieved citizen can speak through elected representatives in parliament or local councils, and reasonably expect to be heard, he has a stake in ensuring that the system continues, because the state's grievance-addressing mechanisms are knit into his daily life, and as such, he has a reason to be threatened when those systems are threatened.

Courtesy Dawn

In the defence of defenders

Inam Ul Haque

In a highly-publicised speech recently, Maulana Fazal-ur-Rehman of JUI-F made aggressive and highly offensive remarks against the Military and martyrs. Speaking at a Jamiat Lawyers Forum convention in Islamabad, he fiercely defended his controversial statement regarding military sacrifices, which he considered as 'paid job' funded by public taxes. Maulana also rejected the longstanding stance of governments on flushing out terrorism from the militancy-affected areas of K-P and Balochistan, by forming lashkars or local militias. Though he correctly asserted that public security is strictly the State's responsibility, he conveniently overlooked the civil responsibility to protect khawra or land, being an age-old tradition, and legal, socio-political norm of the area. Maulana has an old axe to grind with the Military, and every now and then he tries to remain relevant through such uncalled-for statements that do not go well with his stature as the leader of a religio-political party with 10 seats in the National Assembly, 18 seats in the KP Assembly (JUI-F being the largest opposition party) and 12 seats in Balochistan Assembly. As an opinion maker, influencer, seasoned politician and a Pakistani Pashtun from DIK, he should be supportive of the Military in securing his hometown from the stranglehold of militants who, not in very distant past, made two attempts on his life and killed scores of his party cadre. The Military constantly tips him for his safety. In Pakistan's prevailing political culture, it is fashionable to criticise the Military for every perceived societal, economic and political ill, and 'mostly' get away with it. The criticism generally aims at earning political brownie points, seeking attention for all the wrong reasons, endearing oneself to some political party and/or seeking foreign funding indirectly from hostile powers. The new free-wheeling youth brigade with social media as its platform, angered by right or wrong reasons, harbouring half-backed ideas, and a knowledge base limited to TikTok and social media memes provide a fertile ground for such anti-state and anti-Military propaganda.

Courtesy Tribune

Aurangzeb reviews reform progress with IMF senior management



PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb reviewed Pakistan's macroeconomic performance and reform progress with senior International Monetary Fund (IMF) officials. The meetings come as Islamabad seeks to maintain programme credibility, strengthen foreign exchange reserves and return to international capital markets, the finance ministry said on Thursday. According to a statement issued by

the Ministry of Finance, Aurangzeb held a series of meetings with IMF senior management, including First Deputy Managing Director Dan Katz, Deputy Managing Director Nigel Clarke, Middle East and Central Asia Department Director Jihad Azour and Pakistan Mission Chief Iva Petrova. The meetings reviewed Pakistan's progress under the Extended Fund Facility (EFF), Resilience and Sustainability Facility (RSF) and the broader IMF-supported reform pro-

gramme. Aurangzeb highlighted Pakistan's "improved fiscal and external balances", "stronger foreign exchange reserves", "record remittances" and "an improved current account position", the ministry said.

The ministry said discussions also covered "tax and energy reforms", "tariff rationalisation", debt management, diversification of financing sources and Pakistan's return to international capital markets.

Both sides exchanged views on human capital development, women's economic participation, demographic challenges, technology-led growth and private sector-led, export-oriented development. The finance minister thanked the IMF for recognising Pakistan's "strong programme ownership and reform progress", while reaffirming the government's commitment to "fiscal discipline, policy credibility, structural reforms, and long-term economic transformation". The meetings come as Pakistan remains under a \$7 billion IMF programme that has required politically difficult tax increases.

Junaid Ch, Chinese company discuss modern transport links for Pakistan's ports

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chaudhry, currently on an official visit to China, met with Li Lei, Vice President of China Railway Electrification Engineering Group Co., Ltd. (EEB), in Beijing to discuss expanding Pakistan-China cooperation in maritime connectivity, railway electrification and transport infrastructure. EEB is one of China's leading engineering companies specialising in railway electrification, urban transit systems and large-scale transport infrastructure, said a press release issued on Thursday. During the meeting, the two sides discussed opportunities for cooperation in railway electrification, port connectivity, logistics infrastructure, smart transportation systems and other strategic projects to support



Pakistan's maritime economy and strengthen regional trade under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

Junaid Chaudhry said collaboration with leading Chinese engineering firms would help develop efficient, resilient and technology-driven transport networks linking Pakistan's ports with inland economic corridors, enhancing trade competitiveness and supporting sustainable economic growth.

He also highlighted government's commitment to modernising its ports.

Salik launches landmark immigration policy to protect Overseas Pakistanis

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development Chaudhry Salik Hussain on Thursday unveiled the National Immigration and Welfare Policy 2026, a landmark initiative aimed at transforming Pakistan's labour migration system through safer migration pathways, stronger worker protections, advanced skills development and enhanced support for more than 12 million overseas Pakistanis, whose record remittances of over \$41 billion last year played a pivotal role in strengthening the national economy.

Addressing the launch ceremony, Chaudhry Salik Hussain described the policy as a historic milestone in Pakistan's migration governance framework and a reflection of the government's unwavering commitment to safeguarding rights, welfare and aspirations of every Pakistani seeking opportunities abroad. He said the policy is designed to place overseas Pakistanis at the centre of national development by ensuring safe and orderly migration, expanding access to globally relevant

skills, protecting workers from exploitation, strengthening engagement with the diaspora and facilitating the dignified reintegration of returning migrants.

The minister noted that rapid technological advances, demographic shifts and evolving global labour market demands were reshaping economies across the world.

In this increasingly competitive environment, he said, Pakistan must proactively prepare its workforce to seize emerging opportunities and position itself as a leading supplier of skilled human capital. Chaudhry Salik Hussain said the National Immigration and Welfare Policy 2026 would serve as a strategic roadmap for equipping Pakistani workers with the skills, knowledge and protections needed to thrive in international markets while contributing to national prosperity.

Paying tribute to overseas Pakistanis, he said more than 12 million Pakistanis living across the globe had become the country's most effective ambassadors through their professionalism, dedication and hard work.

Their record remittances exceeding \$41 billion during the last fiscal year.

Railways earn record Rs115 bln revenue in FY2025-26: Abbasi

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Railways Muhammad Hanif Abbasi has said that Pakistan Railways generated a record revenue of Rs115 billion during fiscal year 2025-26, registering a 24.2 per cent increase in overall earnings.

Addressing a roundtable conference organised under the Uraan Pakistan Forum, the minister said the government had accorded top priority to upgrading railway tracks, modernising infrastructure and transforming Pakistan Railways into a financially sustainable and technology-driven organisation. He said the operating ratio had improved from 96 per cent to 84 per cent.

The minister said the revival and modernisation of Pakistan Railways was not merely a transport initiative but a key driver of national economic growth, as the government accelerated reforms and infrastructure development under the Uraan Pakistan programme.

Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives.

WUM hosts International seminar on Pakistan-ASEAN Connectivity

PEAK POINT

MARDAN: The Department of Political Science, Women University Mardan, in collaboration with the International Institute for Regional and International Studies (IIRIS) and the Indonesian Corner, Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia, Islamabad, organized an international seminar titled "Reviving the Silk Road to Connect ASEAN and Pakistan: Unlocking Trade, Tourism, and Investment Potential" at the Indonesian Corner, National Library of Pakistan, Islamabad. The seminar brought together diplomats, parliamentarians, academicians, researchers, and students to discuss opportunities for strengthening Pakistan-ASEAN cooperation in trade, tourism, investment,



cultural exchange, and regional connectivity. The seminar was graced by H.E. Mr. Munsoo Kurrimbaccus, High Commissioner of Mauritius, and H.E. Rear Admiral Fred Seneviratne, High Commissioner of Sri Lanka, as distinguished guests. Dr. Sadia Sulaiman, Associate Professor, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, highlighted the historical significance of the Silk Road and emphasized cultural connectivity, business-to-business.

FCAA delegation calls on newly appointed Collector Customs Appraisement



PEAK POINT

PESHAWAR: A delegation led by Frontier Customs Agents Association (FCAA) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa President, Zia-ul-Haq Sarhadi (Sitara Intiaz) held an important meeting with the newly appointed Collector Customs appraisement Ziaullah Shams at the Customs House Peshawar. The delegation included

General Secretary of the Association Mian Waheed Bacha, Member Executive Arshad Khan and others. President FCAA, Zia-ul-Haq Sarhadi congratulated and expressed his best wishes to Ziaullah Shams Collector Customs appraisement on his appointment as Collector Customs. He said that the appointment to this important post is highly appreciated by the business community.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resources Development Chaudhry Salik Hussain addressing to the launching ceremony of National Immigration and Welfare Policy 2026.

At Asean moot, Dar highlights Kashmir dispute, Gulf crisis as core threats to regional peace

PEAK POINT

MANILA: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar called upon the international community and the Asean Regional Forum (ARF) to support a peaceful resolution of core regional conflicts, emphasising that the unresolved Jammu and Kashmir dispute and India's unilateral decision to hold Indus Waters Treaty in abeyance remained at the heart of South Asian instability.

The deputy prime minister, addressing the 33rd ARF Ministerial Meeting on

Thursday, outlined eight key challenges threatening global and regional security, highlighting South Asian stability, the Gulf situation, Gaza, counter-terrorism, Afghanistan, Ukraine, the South China Sea, and climate change.

He told the meeting that the failure to resolve longstanding disputes, particularly the Jammu and Kashmir dispute between India and Pakistan, accelerated serious regional stability issues.

He reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to advocating for a just and peaceful settle-



ment in accordance with the UN Charter, relevant Security Council resolutions, and the aspirations of the Kashmiri people.

Expressing deep concern over India's unilateral decision to hold the Indus Waters

Treaty in abeyance, Dar warned that attempting to weaponise water resources violated international obligations and threatened the lives and livelihoods of 250 million people in Pakistan.

"We simply cannot

afford to let this serious, provocative development remain unaddressed. Let us all be the architects of peace and stability and work together to address the challenges posed by arbitrary, illegal, unilateral actions," he commented.

He urged the international community, particularly ARF members, to address these arbitrary, illegal, and unilateral actions and uphold international law.

Turning to the situation in the Gulf, the deputy prime minister noted that regional developments have impact-

ed nations globally.

Reaffirming Pakistan's role in facilitating peace and de-escalation, he highlighted Islamabad's diplomatic efforts, including facilitating a ceasefire and convening leadership-level talks that led to the signing of the Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding.

Dar expressed gratitude for the trust reposed in Pakistan by the United States, Iran, Gulf nations, and international partners, urging all parties to uphold their commitments, exercise restraint.