

US lawmakers meet Field Marshal Asim Munir, discuss security and economic cooperation

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Two members of the United States House of Representatives Monday met Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir at the General Headquarters in Rawalpindi and discussed regional security, defence cooperation and opportunities to strengthen economic ties, the military's media wing said.

According to a statement issued by the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), Ryan Keith Zinke, a representative from Montana, and Michael James, a representative from Washington, called on Field Marshal Munir, who serves as chief of army staff and chief of defence forces.

The meeting focused on matters of mutual interest, regional security, bilateral defence cooperation and possible avenues for expanding economic collaboration between Pakistan and the United States.

Field Marshal Munir highlighted Pakistan's economic potential and said sustainable regional stability was closely linked to economic growth, increased trade and improved connectivity. He also briefed the visiting lawmakers on Pakistan's structural reforms aimed at creating a business-friendly environment and attracting foreign investment. The US delegation acknowledged Pakistan's role in promoting regional stability and economic resilience, the ISPR said. Both sides also discussed potential areas of bilateral economic engagement, private-sector partnerships and measures to strengthen trade.



Two members of the United States House of Representatives Monday called on Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir at the General Headquarters in Rawalpindi.

Polling concludes across Mirpur Division in first phase of AJK elections

PEAK POINT

MUZAFFARABAD: The first phase of the Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Legislative Assembly elections concluded on Monday across 13 constituencies in Mirpur Division, with authorities extending polling by one hour before voting ended at 6pm and counting began. A total of 296 candidates, including contenders from the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party (IPP) and independent hopefuls, were in the running for seats in Mirpur, Kotli and Bhimber districts. According to election officials, 1,401,439 registered voters were eligible to cast their ballots in the first phase of the elections. The electorate comprised 725,118 men and 675,628 women. The AJK Election Commission established 2,454 polling stations across Mirpur Division, including 597 in Mirpur district's four constituencies, 1,107 in six constituencies of Kotli district and 608 in three constituencies of Bhimber district. Authorities said extensive security measures had been put in place to ensure the smooth conduct of the polls.

Iran says it will halt strikes as long as US bombing pause holds

MAHPARA ZAMAN

DUBAI/WASHINGTON: Iran will halt its own attacks as long as the United States does the same, a senior Iranian official told Reuters on Sunday.

The development comes as the United States pressed pause on its bombing campaign after President Donald Trump's advisers told him they were running out of targets and expressed worries about depleting the US arsenal. After 13 nights of intensifying US airstrikes on Iran, the Pentagon suspended the campaign late on Friday, with no US attacks reported on either Saturday or Sunday. Iran, which had been following each night of US attacks with its own strikes on neighbouring countries that host US bases, has also so far held fire for two days.

The Iranian official, speaking on condition of anonymity, told Reuters that Tehran's position "remains 'attack for attack': if the attacks stop, Iran will also halt its operations. That message has already been conveyed to the United States."

The US ambassador to the United Nations, Mike Waltz, told "Fox News Sunday" and other US media that Trump had decided to pause US attacks to allow more time for diplomacy.

"He's giving talks some space, he's giving it a little bit of room," Waltz said, without providing further details. US military officials in recent days have cautioned that bombings over the past two weeks meant to deter Iranian threats to shipping in the Strait of Hormuz.

Prime Minister, Chinese ambassador discuss regional developments

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Jiang Zaidong, Ambassador of China, called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif at the Prime Minister's House on Monday and discussed matters of mutual interest. Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sen. Mohammad Ishaq Dar, Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Ahsan Iqbal, Advisor to the Prime Minister Dr. Syed Tauqir Shah and Foreign Secretary Ambassador Anna Baloch were also present. The Prime Minister conveyed his warm regards and greetings to President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Qiang. He reaffirmed the Pakistan-China All Weather Strategic Cooperative Partnership, while fondly recalling his visit to China in May this year. He stated that both sides would continue working closely to implement the important decisions and agreements between the leadership of the two countries, for the mutual benefit of their peoples. The regional situation, including developments in the Middle East, Afghanistan and South Asia, were also discussed during the meeting.

Jordanian army says shot down 2 drones, no casualties reported

PEAK POINT

JORDAN: Jordan's armed forces on Monday said two drones had been intercepted, without identifying who launched the drones, Al Jazeera reported. According to the Qatari news agency, no casualties or material damage was reported. Meanwhile, the Israeli military also claimed that it intercepted two drones near the Jordanian border and was investigation where they had been launched from, according to AFP. Earlier, Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail

FO condemns Indian minister's remarks on Kashmir issue, warns against underestimating resolve to thwart 'any adventurism'

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: The Foreign Office (FO) has condemned Indian Defence Minister Rajnath Singh's "highly provocative and irresponsible comments" regarding the Kashmir dispute, saying that the neighbouring country must not underestimate Pakistan's resolve to "thwart any Indian adventurism". On Sunday, Singh had stated that there would be "no talks with Pakistan". According to the Times of India, he went on to say that if any took place, they would only be on Azad Jammu and Kashmir, claiming that it was "illegally occupied by Pakistan". He also said that any "misadventure" would invite a response "beyond their imagination", the publication said. The FO responded to the claims in a statement issued early on Monday, saying Pakistan condemned in the "strongest possible terms the highly provocative and irresponsible comments" by the Indian defence minister. "His statement not only distorts facts regarding the UN and internationally recognised Jammu and Kashmir dispute that remains on the agenda of the UN Security Council but also shows Indian government's deliberate policy to threaten regional and international peace and security," the FO said.

"Such insinuations are an attempt to divert attention from India's continued occupation of illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir, its sponsorship of terrorism across the region, as well as its domestic instability," it said.

Punjab challenge extends beyond flood relief

PEAK POINT

LAHORE: Every monsoon, Muhammad Asif watches the Ravi River anxiously from his home on Lahore's outskirts, uncertain whether rising water levels will once again force his family to leave. "Last year, the water rose so suddenly that many families had to evacuate overnight," Asif told The Express Tribune. "The government needs a stronger early warning system so people have enough time to move before the water reaches their homes." His concerns come as Punjab enters another monsoon season after allocating billions of rupees for flood protection and irrigation in its 2026-27 budget. While authorities say emergency preparations are in place, water experts argue the province still lacks a comprehensive strategy to store excess.



SPORTS



PCB unveils schedule, squads for National Champions Cup 2026



PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) on Monday announced the squads and schedule for the National Champions Cup slated to be held from August 11 to 18 at the Multan Cricket Stadium.

The seven-match 50-over List A tournament will mark the start of Pakistan's 2026-27 domestic cricket season, with all fixtures to be played as day-night encounters. Each match is scheduled to begin at 3pm local time.

The competition will feature four teams — Pakistan Greens, Pakistan Whites, Pakistan Blues

and Pakistan Gold — competing in a single round-robin format. The top two sides at the end of the league stage will qualify for the final on August 18.

The national selection committee has named fixed playing XIs for each team, alongside a 13-player reserve pool.

Teams must field the announced elevens throughout the tournament, with reserve players eligible to replace only injured or concussed players. The reserves will remain with their respective squads during training sessions and on match days.

The tournament will be led by

four prominent captains, with Shaheen Shah Afridi, Shadab Khan, Saim Ayub and Sahibzada Farhan entrusted with leading their respective sides.

According to the PCB, the 44-player squad and reserve pool have been selected as part of Pakistan's preparations for the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup 2027, with the domestic competition expected to play a key role in identifying and assessing talent ahead of the global event.

Squads

Pakistan Greens

Playing XI: Shadab Khan (c), Faheem Ashraf, Fakhar Zaman,

Farhan Yousuf, Mehran Mumtaz, Mohammad Hasnain, Mohammad Salman Mirza, Naseem Shah, Omair Bin Yousuf, Saad Baig (wk) and Sameer Minhas.

Support staff: Ijaz Ahmed Jnr (head coach), Rehan Riaz (bowling coach), Khuram Shahzad (batting coach) and Fahad Iqbal (fielding coach).

Pakistan Whites

Playing XI: Saim Ayub (c), Akif Javed, Ali Raza, Haris Rauf, Hasan Nawaz, Khushdil Shah, Mohsin Riaz, Mohammad Wasim Jnr, Saad Masood, Shahzaib Khan and Usman Khan (wk).

Pakistan storm into Central Asian Volleyball Championship semi-finals with fourth straight win



PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan booked their place in the semi-finals of the Central Asian Volleyball Championship after defeating Uzbekistan in straight sets to register their fourth consecutive victory in the tournament. Playing at the Islamabad Sports Complex, Pakistan produced another dominant display, overcoming Uzbekistan 3-0 with set scores of 25-13, 25-22 and 25-18 to remain unbeaten in the championship. The hosts controlled the opening set with ease before facing a stronger challenge in the second. Pakistan, however, held their nerve to take the set before comfortably sealing the third to complete another convincing victory. With four wins from four matches, Pakistan have secured a place in the last four and strengthened their credentials as one of the tournament's strongest contenders. On the fifth day of the championship, Sri Lanka defeated Kazakhstan, while Bangladesh overcame Nepal in the other two matches. The Central Asian Volleyball Championship is currently underway at the Islamabad Sports Complex, featuring leading teams from across the region competing for the continental title.

Pakistan remains unbeaten in Men's Volleyball C'ship, qualifies for semis



PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan completed a perfect Zong 5G Central Asian Volleyball Association (CAVA) Men's Volleyball Championship 2026 league campaign with fifth consecutive victory here at the Federation (PVF) Liaquat Gymnasium under the auspices of round unbeaten, of Pakistan Sports the Central Asian Pakistan once again

Complex. Volleyball fans (CAVA), the championship has successfully showcased top-class volleyball while strengthening sporting ties among the participating nations.

Pakistan continued their dominant run by defeating Kazakhstan in straight sets to finish the preliminaries under the auspices of round unbeaten, of Pakistan Sports the Central Asian Pakistan once again

displayed outstanding teamwork, disciplined defense, powerful serves, and effective blocking.

Kazakhstan fought hard, particularly in the opening set, but Pakistan maintained control during crucial stages before comfortably winning the remaining sets. Pakistan defeated Kazakhstan 3-0 (25-

23, 25-19, 25-21). With the victory, Pakistan completed the league stage with five victories from five matches, without losing a single match, and finished at the top of the standings to qualify for the semi-finals as the Number one team.

Pakistani father-daughter duo scripts history at International Horseback Archery Championship in Russia



South Korean hockey team begins Pakistan tour today

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: The South Korean national hockey team will pay a historic visit to Pakistan from July 27 (today) to August 8. According to a circular, four international test matches between South Korea and Pakistan will be played at the Nasser Banda Hockey Stadium in Islamabad.

The visit of the South Korean hockey team will give new impetus to the revival of international hockey activities in Pakistan.

The visit of the South Korean national hockey team reflects the vision of the Prime Minister of Pakistan for the promotion of sports in the country.

Advisor to the Prime Minister, Rana Sanaulallah said the visit of the South Korean national hockey team is a historic step towards the revival of the national game in Pakistan.

Pakistan's peaceful and secure image at the global level, Rana Sanaulallah said.

Federal Secretary and PHF President Mohiuddin Wani said the visit of South Korea will play an important

administrative facilities.

Meanwhile, the schedule and panel of technical officials for the 2026 hockey series between Pakistan and South Korea, consisting of four Test matches, have been

Bodies of five climbers found on Russia's highest peak



role in promoting Pakistan's sports diplomacy and bilateral relations.

The government of Pakistan will provide the South Korean team with high-level security, protocol and

announced.

According to schedule, the 4-match Test series between the two teams will be played from July 30 to August 7, 2026 at Nasser Banda Hockey Stadium, Islamabad.

513 smuggled Pakistani artefacts returned, Senate demands answers on illegal heritage trade

NADEEM TANOLI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's cultural heritage has come under renewed focus after a Senate committee was informed that 513 valuable archaeological artefacts had been recovered from the United States after being smuggled out of the country through illegal channels over several decades. The Senate Standing Committee on National Heritage and Culture demanded a detailed report on the people involved in the smuggling network, the total number of missing artefacts and the action taken against those responsible. During the meeting at Parliament House, chaired by

Senator Hidayatullah Khan, officials informed lawmakers that the recovered items mainly belonged to the ancient Gandhara civilisation and represented an important part of Pakistan's history. Officials said the artefacts are now in government custody and described them as priceless national treasures that reflect Pakistan's thousands of years of civilisation. The committee questioned how such important historical items were removed from Pakistan and demanded complete details of investigations into the illegal trade. Members directed the Ministry of National Heritage and Culture to sub-

mit a comprehensive report covering the recovery process, the estimated value of the artefacts, investigation progress and the status of other missing historical objects. Officials informed the committee that plans were being prepared to establish a new museum where the recovered artefacts could be safely preserved and displayed for the public. They said land acquisition for the museum was being pursued in coordination with the Capital Development Authority and options involving public and private partnerships were also being considered. The committee stressed that recovered

national treasures should not remain hidden but should be displayed properly so citizens, students and tourists can learn about Pakistan's ancient history. During the meeting, lawmakers also raised concerns over the reported demolition of a historic Mughal era arch near Rohara Village for a housing development project. The chairman directed the ministry to collect complete information about the incident and present a detailed briefing in the next meeting. The committee emphasised that historical structures and archaeological sites require stronger protection because once destroyed, they

cannot be replaced. Senator Bushra Anjum called for better planning around heritage sites, including improved tourism facilities, visitor services and proper infrastructure to increase tourism while protecting historical locations. She stressed that conservation work must follow proper standards and avoid practices that could damage important cultural sites. Officials also briefed the committee about ongoing efforts to develop Taxila as a heritage and tourism destination. They informed lawmakers that around Rs100 million had already been used during the current year for conservation activities. Additional projects,

including an open air museum and improved facilities for visitors, were also under consideration. The committee highlighted the need for stronger coordination between federal and provincial authorities to protect archaeological locations and ensure that heritage projects are completed effectively. Senator Hidayatullah Khan said Pakistan's cultural and archaeological treasures require serious protection and stronger action against illegal trafficking. The committee concluded that protecting historical assets, recovering stolen artefacts and improving tourism planning are necessary steps to preserve Pakistan's heritage for future generations.

Hepatitis is life-threatening if not diagnosed and treated in time, says Speaker National Assembly

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Speaker National Assembly, Sardar Ayaz Sadiq said that if hepatitis is left undiagnosed or inadequately treated, it can pose a grave threat to human life. He said that ensuring effective prevention, early diagnosis, access to quality treatment, and raising public awareness are among the government's foremost public health priorities. He expressed these views in his message on the occasion of

World Hepatitis Day, observed globally on July 28 each year. Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq said that the observance of World Hepatitis Day aims to promote awareness about hepatitis and underscore the importance of early diagnosis and timely treatment. He noted that the spread of hepatitis can be effectively controlled by adopting preventive measures, promoting safe medical practices, expanding screening programmes, and ensuring timely access to

treatment. Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq commended Prime Minister Mian Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif for launching 'Prime Minister's National Programme for the Elimination of Hepatitis C', describing it as a timely and commendable initiative. He said the programme reflects the government's commitment to make Pakistan free of Hepatitis C by 2030. He expressed confidence that, under the leadership of Prime Minister Muhammad

Shehbaz Sharif, the government's effective efforts would lead to significant progress towards eliminating hepatitis. Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq also appreciated the Government's initiatives, including Hepatitis B vaccination for newborns, nationwide public awareness campaigns, and awareness programmes conducted through educational institutions and the media. He said that Basic Health Units (BHUs) and Rural Health Centres (RHCs) are also playing a vital role in

raising public awareness and encouraging immunisation. Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq reaffirmed Parliament's commitment to strengthening the country's public health system, preventing diseases, promoting preventive healthcare, and enacting effective legislation to ensure the provision of quality healthcare services to the people. He stressed the need for the federal and provincial governments, healthcare professionals, civil society, the media, and

educational institutions to work collectively to enhance public awareness about hepatitis and adopt a coordinated strategy for its elimination. In his message, Deputy Speaker National Assembly Syed Ghulam Mustafa Shah said that public awareness, early diagnosis, and equitable access to treatment are essential for preventing hepatitis. He urged every individual to adopt preventive measures, undergo regular medical check-ups, and follow safe medical practices.

Opinion & Editorial

Arif Mehmood Khan
Group Editor: 0333-5366814

Samra Athar Kakakhel
Resident Editor
Nadim Tanoli
Joint Editor: Mob-0301-7777874
Email: editor.peakpoint@gmail.com
www.peakpoint.pk

Digital roll call

This year, the Sindh government has been making impressive strides in education by introducing reliable, transparent systems through widespread digitisation. First, under the Sindh Secondary Education Improvement Project, it launched an initiative to shift examinations from manual marking to e-marking, alongside wider digitisation of the exam process. Then it launched an e-transfer system for government school teachers which has also completed at least one full transfer cycle. Now, it plans to digitise the student enrolment system by assigning a unique admission ID against students' B-Forms. Under this new initiative, enrolment records, academic performances and examination history would all be available for every student under a single, accessible digital system throughout their academic journey. This makes it much easier to track student progress and gauge any issues in their education before they grow into bigger problems that are harder to overturn. For example, students who are at risk of dropping out or have too many absences against their names can be provided school-led interventions to help bring them back on track. Moreover, a digital system will also deter fake enrolments for board examinations where a person sits for an exam under someone else's name in exchange of money.

Why coercion doesn't work

Malecha Lodhi
WHILE leaders of the hybrid government prioritise foreign engagements and overseas trips, domestic challenges continue to intensify. Public discontent and unrest are mounting across the country but the ruling elite remains detached from this reality.

In much of Balochistan the writ of the state doesn't exist. Militant violence and terrorism are spiralling out of control. In KP escalation in TTP-sponsored terrorist attacks have left people fearful and distrustful of law enforcement authorities. Last week, lawmakers from both sides of the aisle in the KP Assembly described attacks against terrorists as "aimless" and ineffective. Unrest in Azad Jammu and Kashmir is far from over. Elections are approaching but they already lack public credibility. At the national level, the government-opposition stand-off continues to fuel a fraught political environment and deepen polarisation in the country. The PTI-led opposition has called for protests on Aug 5 to mark three years since its leader Imran Khan has been in jail.

Meanwhile a nationwide lawyers' movement is taking shape to protest against the 26th and 27th Constitutional Amendments. The Lawyers Action Committee argues that these amendments have made the judiciary subordinate to the executive and gravely undermined judicial independence. It also demanded

probes into alleged "excesses" committed in Balochistan, AJK and Gilgit-Baltistan and release of all political prisoners. Add to this ferment public frustration with the growing cost-of-living burden and power outages during peak summer and the picture is one of growing turmoil with public anger rising against the rulers by the day.

What is the hybrid government's answer to this? There isn't one. There certainly isn't a problem-solving response. Instead, the strategy is denial. Pretend everything is fine. Then attack anyone who says otherwise. To the extent that there is a response, it relies primarily on political repression and coercive measures to manage opposition, unrest and public discontent. But putting a lid on problems doesn't make them go away.

Authoritarian rule can neither meet Pakistan's challenges nor make the government secure.

The record is there for everyone to see. Along with undermining judicial independence by controversial constitutional amendments there is a marked descent into authoritarianism. Democracy exists mostly in name. Parliament is little more than a rubber stamp. Freedom of assembly is curbed. The opposition is suppressed with its leaders locked away in jails and given long sentences in dubious cases. The media is controlled with TV channels told what not to broadcast and even who to invite to talk shows. Dissent is

silenced. Digital space is restricted. Pressure has been mounted on human rights organisations that impedes their work.

Yet the lesson to be learned from Pakistan's tortured history is that governments cannot strengthen or secure themselves by such oppressive and strong-arm methods. What counts is legitimacy and public acceptance that actions taken by the government are fair and lawful. But the notion the hybrid ruling elite has of ideal governance is that provided by a 'hard state'. The aspiration for a hard state has been frequently voiced by the country's top military and civilian leaders. What does it mean? Leaders who used that expression have never really explained. They seem to want a state that has strong governance, centralised power and the capacity to assure national security. But what they have established is an authoritarian state. The hybrid government has at its disposal an array of coercive instruments that it has used to reinforce its power. But has that helped it achieve the core goals of security, stability and the state's financial solvency? Not by a long shot. It mistakes a hard state for a competent one. A competent state is an efficiently functioning, trusted state that can secure these goals with public support and of course by a legitimate political leadership.

Courtesy Dawn

Civil service reform: hollow slogans

Dr Syed Akhtar Ali Shah

Civil service reforms have topped the agendas of Pakistan's political parties since inception. For decades, leaders have championed slogans to reorient the bureaucracy, foster specialisation and restructure the state machinery for peak efficiency despite endless committees, official reports, foreign consultants and modern buzzwords, good governance is still out of reach.

The International Crisis Group has, in one of its reports, stated that "decades of mismanagement, political manipulation and corruption have rendered Pakistan's civil service incapable of providing effective governance and basic public services." In public perceptions, the country's 2.4 million civil servants are widely seen as unresponsive and corrupt, and bureaucratic procedures cumbersome and exploitative. Bureaucratic dysfunction and low capacity undermine governance, paving the way for democratic subversion and extremist destabilisation.

It is, however, also a fact that successive governments committed to initiating reforms driven by encouraging expertise and restructuring the administrative machinery. Not only did they introduce special pay scales such as P-I and P-II to attract professionals, they also invited experts from world-renowned institutions - MIT, Yale, Stanford, Oxford, Cambridge, etc - to advise on reforms in institutions such as the FBR, police and other services. However, no noticeable change could be seen, and inevitably, the system functioned on the same stereotypical model. The antiquated civil service machinery could not deliver in the past, nor does it have the capacity to deliver in the future, regardless of how many experiments are attempted, unless fundamental changes occur. Mere cosmetic changes will not fix a system whose structure was designed for an agrarian economy. Administrative cadres - both at the federal and provincial levels - continue to rule the roost.

Courtesy Tribune

Atta Tarar says 2019 media policies shrank industry's financial space



PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar on Monday said media policies introduced in 2019 were the primary cause of the financial difficulties facing Pakistan's media industry, saying those measures significantly shrank the sector's financial space and their effects continued to be felt years later.

Addressing the inauguration ceremony of the National Press Club's website, the minister said it was the government's responsibility to for-

mulate policies that strengthened the media industry and ensured journalists could earn a dignified livelihood.

Referring to the financial challenges confronting media organisations, Tarar said a policy introduced in 2019 had capped federal grants for press clubs at Rs1 million for the National Press Club and Rs500,000 for smaller press clubs.

Questioning the rationale behind the decision, he said there was no justification for imposing such a restriction on the National Press Club. He added that the government had already moved an amendment to remove the cap, stressing that the country's premier press club, located in the federal capital, should not be subject to such limitations. He said the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting had directed the secretary information to resolve the matter.

The minister also criticised the previous government's decision to slash official advertising rates for television channels, saying top broadcasters saw their per-minute rates

reduced from around Rs300,000 to about Rs185,000, while other channels also faced substantial reductions.

He said the cut in official advertising rates had placed long-term financial pressure on media organisations. Although periodic revisions had since been made, he noted that the sharp reduction implemented in 2019 continued to affect the industry's financial health six to seven years later.

Tarar maintained that the financial pressures currently facing media organisations stemmed from those earlier policies rather than the present government's approach. He said that irrespective of editorial policy, no television channel or newspaper was currently facing suspension of government advertisements. Referring to one newspaper that had previously encountered an issue, he said the matter had been resolved through dialogue and no longer affected the organisation financially. The minister said the government's objective was to replace earlier policies.

Khawaja Asif dismisses Indian defence minister's remarks on Kashmir

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Defence Khawaja Muhammad Asif strongly dismissed recent irresponsible remarks by the Indian defence minister on the Jammu and Kashmir dispute, calling them irresponsible and misleading. Asif said the comments were another attempt to distort internationally recognised legal realities through political rhetoric and coercive posturing, he wrote on his social media platform X. He said that such statements do not change the status of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir, nor do they help promote regional peace, stability, or meaningful dialogue. He said Jammu and Kashmir remains an internationally recognised disputed territory, the final disposition of which is to be determined in accordance with the relevant UN



Security Council resolutions and the freely expressed will of the Kashmiri people. Asif said India's repeated attempts to malign Pakistan lack credibility in light of its own well-documented record of state-sponsored terrorism and criminal activities. In fact, India remains the biggest sponsor of terrorism and perpetrator of instability in South Asia, holding the region hostage to its aggressively revisionist designs.

The Minister said equally alarming is India's irresponsible rhetoric which risks lowering the threshold for interstate conflict.

Aurangzeb chairs maiden Access to Finance Steering Committee meeting, seeks faster PM plan implementation

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb on Monday chaired the maiden meeting of the Access to Finance Steering Committee and directed all stakeholders to accelerate implementation of the Prime Minister's Access to Finance Plan 2026-2028 to improve affordable credit for key sectors of the economy.

The committee, constituted to provide strategic oversight of the Prime Minister's Access to Finance Plan, reviewed measures aimed at expanding affordable financing for small and medium enterprises (SMEs), agriculture, information technology (IT), exports, renewable energy and housing, a news release said. The meeting received a comprehensive presentation on the proposed governance structure, targeted outcomes and implementation workstreams designed to expand access to finance, strengthen financial inclusion and enhance affordable lending for priority sectors. Members were also briefed on progress

made by the SME Finance Sub-Committee and reviewed the implementation status of the government's flagship financing initiatives, including Zarkhez-e (Asaan Zarai Qarza), the Apna Ghar Scheme and the Pakistan Accelerated Vehicle Electrification (PAVE) initiative, which promotes affordable electric bikes and e-rickshaws.

The committee discussed a proposed three-tier governance framework comprising monthly progress updates to the Prime Minister, fortnightly strategic oversight by the Steering Committee chaired by the finance minister, and weekly meetings of sector-specific sub-committees.

Participants also reviewed a reporting framework featuring Resolution Target Dates (RTDs), a structured execution mechanism and periodic reporting to strengthen accountability and monitor progress across all implementation workstreams. The finance minister also stressed the need for an effective progress-monitoring dashboard.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, chairing the first meeting of the Access to Finance Steering Committee at the Finance Division.

NA Speaker pays tribute to Sarwar Shaheed on 78th martyrdom anniversary

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Speaker of National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq Monday paid glowing tribute to Captain Raja Muhammad Sarwar Shaheed, Nishan-e-Haider, on the occasion of his 78th martyrdom anniversary, describing his supreme sacrifice as a timeless symbol of courage, patriotism and devotion to the defence of the country. In a statement, the Speaker said Sarwar Shaheed embraced martyrdom on July 27, 1948, while defending the motherland in Azad Jammu and Kashmir.

He said the valiant officer displayed unparalleled bravery and unwavering determination in the line of duty.

Ayaz Sadiq said that Sarwar Shaheed was the first recipient of Pakistan's highest military award, the Nishan-e-Haider, adding that his sacrifice remains a shining chapter in the glorious traditions of the Pakistan Armed Forces.

He said the sacrifices of the country's martyrs are the guarantee of Pakistan's.

Mohsin Naqvi meets Jamaat-e-Islami Chief at Mansoor

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi visited Mansoor on Monday, where he held a meeting with Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Hafiz Naeem ur Rehman to discuss the country's overall political and security situation, regional developments, and issues affecting the public.

The meeting, held at the Jamaat-e-Islami headquarters, was attended by the party's Acting Secretary General Nazir Ahmed Janjua and Information Secretary Shakeel Ahmed Turabi. The leaders exchanged views on national affairs and emphasized the importance of addressing public concerns through dialogue and effective governance. During the discussion, Interior Minister Mohsin



Naqvi highlighted the evolving regional situation and said that tensions had eased once again due to the continuous efforts of the Field Marshal. He underscored the significance of sustained efforts aimed at promoting stability and reducing regional uncertainty. The meeting also carried a solemn tone as the Interior Minister expressed his heartfelt condolences over the demise of Jamaat-e-Islami Secretary General Ameer-ul-Azrem. Naqvi conveyed his sympathies to Hafiz Naeem.

8th senate meeting of Women University Mardan approves surplus budget

PEAK POINT

MARDAN: Women University Mardan held its 8th Senate Meeting on 27th July 2026, during which key financial, administrative, and institutional matters were discussed and approved. The meeting was chaired by the Minister for Higher Education, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa/Pro-Chancellor, Mr. Meena Khan Afridi, in the presence of Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Razia Sultana. Under the dynamic leadership of Prof. Dr. Razia Sultana, the university continues to make remarkable progress in academic, administrative, financial, and institutional development. During the meeting, the minutes of the



previous (7th) Senate Meeting, along with the Action Taken Report (ATR), were approved. The Senate appreciated the effective implementation of the decisions made during the previous meeting. The Senate also approved the surplus budget of Women University Mardan for the financial year 2026-27, reflecting the university's sound financial planning.

Aleem Khan urges AJK voters to prioritize national interests, performance in elections

PEAK POINT

LAHORE: President of the Isteqdam-e-Pakistan Party (IPP) Abdul Aleem Khan on Sunday urged the people of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), particularly the youth, to exercise their right to vote responsibly and prioritize national interests while electing their representatives. In a video message, he said elections were not merely about changing governments but about shaping the future of coming generations and ensuring the region's long-term prosperity, according to a press release. He highlighted

that sustainable progress and economic stability in Azad Kashmir depend heavily on developing robust local revenue streams. He stressed that until AJK's local economy becomes self-reliant, efforts to raise personal incomes, execute large-scale development projects, and realize public welfare goals will remain unfulfilled.

Calling for the promotion of new investments, he urged the government to foster a business-friendly environment where local and foreign investors can operate with complete confidence, thereby

expanding commercial activity and driving long-term economic growth. Investment, he added, will not only strengthen the regional economy but also generate significant employment opportunities for unemployed youth, particularly educated young men and women.

Underscoring AJK's vast natural potential, the IPP President remarked that Azad Kashmir's breathtaking landscape, scenic valleys, and world-class tourist spots make it an ideal engine for regional growth.

Modernizing the tourism

sector, upgrading basic infrastructure, and incentivizing private investment would significantly boost local revenues while creating thousands of direct and indirect jobs. Reminding citizens that elections every five years offer a crucial opportunity to redefine their trajectory, Abdul Aleem Khan urged voters to assess candidates based on their track record rather than rhetoric or partisan loyalty. He called on the public to reject politicians who make grand pre-election promises only to ignore public grievances once in power,

advising them instead to place their trust in proven performance and honest leadership. Directly addressing the youth of Azad Kashmir, the IPP President encouraged them to look beyond simply casting their own votes. He urged them to actively guide their parents, elders, and family members to the polling stations with a shared vision. "Voting is not just about an individual; it is about the future of your family, your region, and Azad Kashmir as a whole," he remarked, tasking the youth with raising political awareness within

their communities.

He concluded by calling on voters to critically evaluate past performance, fulfil legitimate commitments, and persist in issues before making their choice.

"The people of Azad Kashmir have a defining opportunity to choose a better future—one that leads to a prosperous, resilient, and stable region," he stated, reaffirming the IPP's unwavering commitment to public service, economic stability, transparent governance, youth employment, and all-round development across.