



President Zardari arrives in Kyrgyzstan for official visit to boost bilateral ties



Pakistan, Saudi Arabia sign MoU to build new cricket stadium in Jeddah



Bilawal urges ownership and governance rights for Gilgit-Baltistan, AJK

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PM Shehbaz orders embassies to step up overseas job efforts for Pakistanis

PEAK POINT
ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Monday directed Pakistani embassies abroad to accelerate efforts to identify employment opportunities for the country's workforce.
He issued the directives while chairing a review meeting on measures aimed at providing jobs for Pakistani youth.
The prime minister instructed that the entire system of the Protectorate of Emigrants be digitized.
He also directed the Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis, the National Vocational and Technical Training Commission (NAVTTTC) and the PM's Youth Programme to ensure the provision of skills and language courses

along with certifications.
PM Shehbaz said Pakistani workforce was highly capable and emphasised that the government was taking every possible step to ensure access to international-standard education and opportunities at the global level.
The premier instructed relevant institutions to strengthen engagement with different countries to align Pakistani certifications with international standards.
The prime minister further ordered that language education, along with certifications, be ensured for countries offering employment opportunities and called for a report on the performance of technical and vocational training institutions as well as the establishment.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting regarding productive employment for youth.

Arif Habib outlines expansion plan for PIA after privatization

PEAK POINT
ISLAMABAD: Chairman Arif Habib of Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) is expected to become a profitable company in its first year after privatization, outlining plans to expand the airline's fleet, invest in engineering facilities and recruit staff. Habib said PIA currently has a fleet of 19 aircraft, which the new management plans to increase to 60 over the next five years. He said four to five aircraft currently out of service would be returned to operation after repairs, adding that work was progressing rapidly to make them airworthy.

Army top brass affirms commitment to take 'all measures necessary' to ensure availability of Pakistan's water share

PEAK POINT
ISLAMABAD: As India continues to violate the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT), the army's top brass on Monday affirmed its "resolute commitment" to undertake "all measures necessary" to ensure the availability of Pakistan's rightful share of water. The development came as Chief of Defence Forces (CDF) and Chief of the Army Staff Field Marshal Asim Munir presided over the 27th Corps Commanders' Conference (CCC) at General Headquarters (GHQ) in Rawalpindi, according to a statement from the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR).
"The forum, taking note of Indian rhetoric surrounding the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT), reaffirmed the guidance given in the National Security Committee (NSC

directive" of April 24, 2025, the period of conflict with which followed India's uni-



lateral move to put the treaty in abeyance. "The forum expressed resolute commitment to undertake all measures necessary to ensure availability of Pakistan's rightful share of water as per the directives of the government and inspirations of the people of Pakistan," the statement read.
The attendees of the conference noted that "post comprehensive defeat inflicted" in Marka-i-Haq —

firm resolve," the statement read. Reviewing the evolving regional landscape, the forum "appreciated Pakistan's constructive role in promoting dialogue, de-escalation and regional stability" as it remains a mediator in the peace negotiations between the United States and Iran. The conference also reaffirmed the country's commitment to peaceful conflict resolution between the two countries, respect for international law, and enhanced regional cooperation to address shared security challenges, the military's media wing said. The army brass also "rejected and strongly condemned the ongoing human rights violations and unilateral demographic engineering in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK), declaring that Kashmir remains the jugular vein of Pakistan".

PPP's Amjad Hussain sworn in as GB chief minister



PEAK POINT
GILGIT-BALTISTAN: PPP's Amjad Hussain on Monday was sworn in as the chief minister of Gilgit-Baltistan in a ceremony attended by his party chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari.
Advocate Hussain was elected for the role on June 22 following the June 7 elections, in which the PPP emerged as the largest party, with 12 seats in the 24-member GB assembly. Addressing the ceremony in Gilgit after taking the oath, Hussain said the PPP emerged as the "largest party" in the elections. He noted that the region's youth and women "had a huge role" in the polls, in which his party candidates secured several seats. Hussain particularly thanked the people of Nagar who "gave the PPP 100 per cent results."

Hamas announces dissolution of Gaza governing body

PEAK POINT
GAZA: Palestinian group Hamas announced on Monday the dissolution of the body that has governed the Gaza Strip for nearly two decades, clearing the way for a technocratic committee to implement civilian rule.
The move marks a significant political shift by Hamas, which has run Gaza since it seized control from Palestine's Fatah group in 2007 after winning legislative elections the previous year. Since a ceasefire took effect in Gaza last October between Hamas and Israel, the group has repeatedly said it is prepared to step aside from day-to-day governance, but the thorny issue of its disarmament remains unresolved.
"The head of the government's emergency committee Mohammed al-Farra has officially submitted his resignation," Ismail al-Thawabta, head of Hamas' government media office, told AFP.
"He has also decided to dissolve the committee to facilitate the administrative and governmental transition to the National Committee for the Administration of Gaza (NACAG)."

Millions gather as funeral procession of Iran's assassinated supreme leader begins in Tehran

PEAK POINT
IRAN: Vast crowds gathered for the funeral procession of Iran's assassinated supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in Tehran on Monday, with authorities estimating millions were on the streets in numbers that could rival those of his predecessor's farewell nearly four decades ago.
Authorities have yet to give an official turnout figure but AFP images showed huge numbers stretching along major boulevards in the Iranian capital.
After lying in state for two days at Tehran's Grand Mosalla religious complex, the body of Khamenei — who was assassinated on the first day of the Middle East war on February 28 — began its journey through the capital accompanied by massive crowds of mourners.
Flower petals covered the coffin as it made its way along the streets, AFP images showed.
Mourners gathered in Imam Hussein Square in eastern Tehran and handed an effigy of US President Donald Trump, according to state media.
Authorities are hoping to avoid a repeat of the chaos that marred the 1989 funeral of Khamenei's predecessor Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, which drew an estimated 10 million people, according to state news agency IRNA. Crowd surges in Khomeini's funeral killed more than 10 people and injured over 10,000.

DPM/FM Dar reaffirms Pakistan's commitment to UN Charter, international law

PEAK POINT
ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar on Monday reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to continue working towards promoting the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, respect for international law and treaties, and active international cooperation for global peace and prosperity.
He was talking to Maria Fernanda Espinosa, former Foreign Minister of Ecuador and currently candidate for the position of United Nations Secretary-General who called on him here, according to a press statement issued by the Foreign Office Spokesperson.
Welcoming Ms. Espinosa, DPM/FM expressed Pakistan's full support for strengthening multilateralism, and ensuring the central role of the United Nations in the global affairs.
He expressed the hope that the incoming Secretary General will carry out much needed reforms in the United Nations and will ensure the implementation of longstanding UNSC resolutions, especially for Palestine.



SPORTS



Fatima Sana named in ICC Women's T20 World Cup 2026 Team of the Tournament

Four matches decided in National Women's Under-21 Hockey C'ship



PEAK POINT ISLAMABAD: The International Cricket Council (ICC) on Monday unveiled its Women's T20 World Cup 2026 Team of the Tournament, with Pakistan captain Fatima Sana earning a place in the prestigious selection after producing a series of influential performances with both bat and ball during the competition.

The Team of the Tournament comprised 12 players, and featured representatives from eight countries.

World champions Australia led the selection with four players, while runners-up England

had two representatives. Australia's strong presence reflected their dominant campaign, which culminated in a seventh Women's T20 World Cup title.

Pakistan, India, South Africa, Ireland and Sri Lanka each had one player in the squad, while Scotland's Darcey Carter was named as the 12th player.

The players include Australia's Beth Mooney, Ellyse Perry, Ash Gardner and captain Sophie Molineux, alongside England's Danni Wyatt-Hodge and Nat Sciver-Brunt.

The remaining selections

included Pakistan's Fatima Sana, India's Sree Charani, South Africa's Marizanne Kapp, Ireland's Orla Prendergast and Sri Lanka's Nilakshika Silva, while Scotland's Darcey Carter was named as the 12th player.

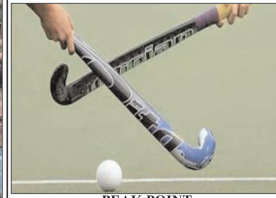
For Pakistan, Fatima's inclusion was among the major highlights of the ICC announcement.

Although the Green Shirts could win only one match in the 12-team tournament, which came in their last group-stage fixture against Netherlands, their captain Fatima delivered consistent all-round performances throughout the mega event.

The all-rounder finished the tournament with 11 wickets in five matches at an impressive average of 11.27 and also contributed 85 runs, establishing herself as one of the most effective performers in her side's campaign.

The ICC described Fatima as the "beating heart" of Pakistan's team, highlighting her impact in crucial matches.

Against South Africa, she struck an unbeaten 55 after Pakistan had slipped to 50-8 before returning figures of 3-16 with the ball, nearly guiding her side to a famous victory.



PEAK POINT ISLAMABAD: The Prime Minister National Women's Under-21 Hockey Championship 2026, organized by the Pakistan Hockey Federation (PHF) with the support of Alaska Batteries, PTCL, and PARCO, continued on its fifth day here at the Naseer Bunda Hockey Stadium.

The tournament is being held from July 2 to July 10, with four matches played on Monday. In the opening match of the day, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (B) defeated Balochistan 2-1. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (B) scored two well-crafted goals, while Balochistan managed to pull one back.

In the second fixture, Olympian Zakirullah Academy delivered an impressive performance to register a convincing 4-0 victory over Sindh (C).

The third match saw Punjab (B) edge past Sindh (C) 1-0, with Asma Shehzad scoring the only goal of the contest.

In the final match of the day, Punjab (A) recorded one of the biggest wins of the tournament by thrashing EDF Islamabad 15-0 in a completely one-sided encounter. Punjab (A) dominated proceedings from start to finish, displaying superiority in every department of the game.

Babar vows to back young Pakistan ahead of tough Test tours



PEAK POINT ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Test captain Babar Azam has said that he is confident and better prepared as he takes charge of the Test side once again, adding that his focus will remain on discipline, fitness and performance.

"Whenever you get the opportunity to captain Pakistan, it is always an honour," Babar said in an exclusive interview on Straight Drive with Salman Butt. "I have learnt a lot from my previous experience as captain and also from the time I played as a player. With time, you gain maturity and

clarity. I am confident that this time, with good planning and a positive mindset, I will lead the team to success."

Reflecting on his earlier captaincy performances from tenure, Babar said he had reviewed his decisions and tried to learn from the experience.

"As captain, you make good decisions and sometimes you pressure the feel you could have done better. When you sit down and reflect, you get a clearer picture. I have rebuilt my mindset, brought more clarity into it, and taken things positively," Babar said.

Pakistan captain said his main focus areas for the team would be discipline, fitness and performance.

"My main focus is on three things: discipline, fitness and performance. These will matter a lot for me as captain and for the backing players during difficult phases. This is a young team with some of the best performers from domestic cricket. As a senior player and captain, my job is to take them from relaxed and back into difficult times. International cricket is a pressure game, so I try to take them off the field."

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ISLAMABAD: The second batch of the Summer Camp 2026 begins at Police Lines Headquarters, where children will participate in swimming, martial arts, gymnastics, self-defence and other activities aimed at promoting confidence, discipline and a healthy lifestyle.

Winning debut for Zimbabwe ODI captain Ngarava against Bangladesh

PEAK POINT ZIMBABWE: Richard Ngarava celebrated his debut as Zimbabwe one-day international captain on Monday by scoring 27 and taking three wickets in a 25-run victory over Bangladesh in Harare.

match ODI series by winning again on Thursday. The final match is set for Saturday.

Newman Nyamhuri topped the home team with 33 runs. Ngarava and Innocent Kaia (26) were the

hope and the tourists failed to take advantage despite needing to average just 2.84 runs per over to win.

Only Nurul Hasan (31), Towhid Hridoy (25) and captain Mehidy Hasan Miraz (10) reached double



Put in to bat, Zimbabwe were all out for 141 with right-arm quick Nahid Rana capturing six wickets, including that of Ngarava.

Rana (6-21) wreaked havoc in his 10 overs, including two maidens. His figures were the best by a Bangladeshi in an ODI.

But while Zimbabwe struggled to make runs, Bangladesh battled even more. They plummeted to 116 all out with only three batters reaching double figures.

Zimbabwe, fresh from an innings victory over Bangladesh in a one-off Test, can clinch the three-

other batters to impress. Sikandar Raza, often a prolific scorer for Zimbabwe, managed just one run before becoming the first victim of Rana, leaving the hosts reeling at 45-4.

A 63-run eighth-wicket stand between Ngarava and Nyamhuri offered Zimbabwe a glimmer of figures. The lone fruitful partnership came when Hridoy and Nurul Hasan added 49 runs for the fourth wicket before Hridoy was caught by Ben Curran at deep third off the bowling of Nyamhuri (2-22). Ngarava (3-31) and Brad Evans (3-34) shared the bowling honours for Zimbabwe.



KARACHI: People watch FIFA World Cup match on giant multimedia screen in Lyari Football Stadium here on Monday.



IBCC Foreign examination regulation and Cambridge registration plan under review

NADEEM TANOLI
ISLAMABAD: A parliamentary committee has raised key questions over Pakistan's Cambridge qualification equivalence system, foreign examination regulation, and IBCC oversight framework. Lawmakers reviewed how O and A Level grades are converted into local certificates and stressed the need for stronger regulation, transparency, and alignment with the national curriculum to ensure fair education stan-

dards. The most important issue highlighted in the meeting was the Inter Board Coordination Commission's (IBCC) role in managing foreign qualification equivalence, especially for Cambridge O Level, IGCSE, AS Level, and A Level students. Lawmakers were briefed on how foreign grades are converted into Pakistani SSC and HSSC equivalence under existing rules, including subject requirements, grading formulas, and application

procedures. Officials also explained that the IBCC operates under the IBCC Act, 2023, which gives it legal authority to regulate foreign qualification awarding bodies in Pakistan. Under this system, 15 regulatory standards are applied, covering governance, curriculum alignment, quality assurance, legal compliance, accessibility, and examination integrity. A key development shared with the committee was that Cambridge

International Education has been recommended for registration as a Qualification Awarding Body in Pakistan. However, this approval is subject to strict conditions, including compliance with IBCC regulations, approval for expansion, and alignment of compulsory subjects with Pakistan's national curriculum. Lawmakers reviewed these details and stressed that the system must remain fair, transparent, and consistent for all

students. They emphasized that thousands of students in Pakistan depend on Cambridge qualifications, and even small gaps in regulation or equivalence policy can create confusion and inequality in higher education admissions. Members also questioned whether the current system is strong enough to ensure that foreign qualification providers fully match Pakistan's academic standards, especially in core subjects. They called

for stronger monitoring so that international systems operate in line with national education requirements. At the end of the meeting, officials from the Ministry of Federal Education, Higher Education Commission (HEC), and other departments reaffirmed their commitment to improving coordination, strengthening regulatory systems, and ensuring that all qualification frameworks operate transparently under national law.

National Assembly secretariat and KP Ombudsperson secretariat sign MoU to advance Women's Rights

PEAK POINT
ISLAMABAD: The National Assembly Secretariat and the Ombudsperson Secretariat, Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, today signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) aimed at strengthening institutional cooperation, coordination, and information-sharing to advance women's rights, safeguard women's inheritance

rights, promote meaningful participation of women in the parliamentary system, ensure the effective implementation of the Protection Against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act, 2010, enhance workplace safety, and foster stronger parliamentary engagement. The MoU establishes a collaborative framework for information sharing, capacity building, consultations, and technical

cooperation, while reaffirming the commitment of both institutions to uphold their respective constitutional mandates, institutional autonomy, and parliamentary privileges. Under the agreement, cooperation with the Women's Parliamentary Caucus will also be strengthened to enhance public awareness, protect women's inheritance rights, promote women's effective participation in

parliamentary processes, support the effective implementation of the Protection Against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act, 2010, facilitate effective enforcement of relevant legislation, and strengthen oversight through sustained consultation and constructive dialogue. The Memorandum of Understanding reflects the shared resolve of both institutions to implement

institutional collaboration, promote good governance, and advance women's rights, including the protection of inheritance rights, greater participation of women in democratic and parliamentary processes, and the effective implementation of laws designed to ensure safe and dignified workplaces for women. The MoU was signed by Mr. Saeed Ahmad, Acting Secretary, National

Assembly, and Barrister Rubab Mehdi, Ombudsperson, Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The signing ceremony was attended by Syed Shamoos Hashmi, Special Secretary (Special Initiatives), National Assembly Secretariat, along with senior officials of the National Assembly Secretariat and the Office of the Provincial Ombudsperson, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

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1,000 days and counting

Over 1,000 days have passed since Israel started its campaign of terror against innocent civilians in Gaza. While the initial attacks were supposedly in retaliation for the Hamas strikes of October 7, 2023 on Israel, three years on, few people will still draw the connection. At this point, Israeli soldiers are just massacring Palestinians because they enjoy committing murder. And most of the world's champions of human rights are sitting silent - some are still selling Israel arms and ammunition. It is almost as if Palestinian lives have no value for them. After all, over 73,000 Palestinians - including more than 21,500 children - have been killed since Israel began its bombardment, according to the Palestinian government. Independent sources also lend credence to these figures. More than 1,000 of those killed were infants under the age of one. Over 520 babies were born and then killed during this genocide. Yet, Israel is still not an international pariah, and even labeling it as a genocidal state is somehow still a cause for debate, even though the world's foremost experts on genocide, along with many survivors of the Holocaust and other genocides, all agree that Israel's conduct meets the definition. The US, in particular, has provided diplomatic cover and military support, making it complicit in every bomb that falls.

Now for the country, please

Malecha Lodhi
PAKISTAN has earned international appreciation and respect for its role in mediating between the US and Iran and helping them achieve a ceasefire and a memorandum of understanding that aims to pave the way for a lasting settlement. This kind of mediatory role finds no precedent in Pakistan's diplomatic history. It has raised Pakistan's global standing and boosted its international image. The diplomatic achievement has sparked discussion in the country about the economic benefits Pakistan might gain. Certainly, economic opportunities that could open from these developments merit serious thinking and exploring. Also, if the war had not come to a negotiated end there would have been enormous pressure on Pakistan's fragile economy from higher oil prices, disruption in energy supplies and uncertain remittances. This could have derailed its economic stabilisation efforts. But there has also been a fair amount of wishful thinking about the economic dividends from Pakistan's diplomacy. Some even compared the present moment to the situation after 9/11, when Pakistan became a front-line state in the war on terror and recipient of significant US financial and military assistance. This is a false parallel. There is no economic largesse on its way from Washington. Nor is there a rationale for one. Yet old habits die hard. There is a long history of the country's ruling elites seeking

and earning geopolitical rents from its international alignments. This helped them keep the economy afloat while avoiding domestic economic reform and taxing themselves and their political base. It also encouraged an attitude that looked outside rather than within to address the country's economic weaknesses. And it created an official mindset of relying on pay-offs, bailouts and other people's money. This persists. Pakistan's destiny will be shaped by choices made at home, not by its external engagements. Among exuberant statements from government officials, one that exemplifies unrealistic expectations is this. An official claimed "advancing stability abroad" had made Pakistan a "credible destination" for foreign investment. He didn't explain why this was so when conditions in the country hadn't changed. Another top minister declared that with diplomatic success the "sun of progress and prosperity" will soon rise over Pakistan. Trying to talk up confidence is one thing. But such hyperbolic statements are misplaced and misleading. Instead of wishful talk about economic windfalls from diplomacy, energy is best spent on addressing the country's political, economic and security challenges and fixing its structural problems. If the government can be a peacemaker abroad it should also make peace at home. A peaceful political environment requires a truce

between the government and opposition. Stability is not possible in a divided and polarised country. The principal opposition party represents a large section of society, governs a strategically important province and remains the most popular party in the country. Given Pakistan's federal structure, inclusive governance is necessary. That means working with and not against opposition-run provinces. Repression, jailing opponents and handing down long prison sentences can neither eliminate the opposition nor create stability. Authoritarianism as a model for the hybrid government undermines democracy and impedes the country's progress. The internal security situation poses a serious threat despite sustained efforts by the army and law-enforcement personnel. The rise in militant violence across KP and Balochistan has not been contained. Last year was the deadliest in a decade for security forces. This demands a review of the government's counter-insurgency strategy which still relies primarily on kinetic actions. Balochistan presents a special case as the underlying sources of long-standing public disaffection have yet to be tackled. Insurgents must be isolated and the trust of the local community won. But in conflating terrorists with Baloch nationalists, branding every dissident group and leader as traitors and handing life sentences to dissidents, state policy contradicts the core principle of fighting militancy. Courtesy Dawn

Death: a publicity stunt?

Ali Hassan Bangwar
Recently, a father in Multan, crushed by poverty, tried to bury his deceased son without a shroud. Others intervened and ensured a dignified burial. This isn't the news. Isn't it, you hearless? You all might question it. What is the news then? Is it the lawmaker's statement declaring the act a publicity stunt, stating that life for the people isn't that hellish yet in our country? It isn't the news, as the public usually finds itself trolled - not by words alone, but largely by actions. That is, how people, particularly the marginalised, are treated in policies and practices, and how they are viewed in the power corridors, isn't something new. Then what, if anything, is the news amidst all this? Of all that is loudly talked about and valiantly practised by those in positions of power, if anything here is novel or newsworthy, it is neither the death of the son nor the poverty of his father - it is the way the deceased was buried. The dead son questioned the system in a way he never could while alive. Death from hunger, poverty and systematic oppression isn't something new, and therefore isn't newsworthy - not for a callous society and not for its cunning elite. Earlier, people used to dread death. For it defied all their dreams, relations and aspirations. Today, they dread life instead. Living - for a larger population - is no longer a luxury, nor does it inspire hope in our part of the world. Those who can't afford minimal survival solicit death. They see death as their only escape from the struggles of life. But hold on a while. Could death, amidst a life already in freefall, ever be easy or free of cost? Could it escape the burden of life? For the poor, it doesn't. It demands what their lives had demanded: a piece of cloth renamed as a shroud. Therefore, highlighting the death of an otherwise inglorious life in social media is, for the oppressive system, unjustified - a scheme, a protest staged against it, a publicity stunt. Courtesy Tribune

Pakistan, Saudi Arabia sign MoU to build new cricket stadium in Jeddah



SAUDI ARABIA: Pakistan and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on Monday signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on a new stadium project in Jeddah.

The MoU was signed by Saudi Cricket Federation Chairman Prince Saud bin Mishaal bin Muhammad Al Saud and Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Chairman and Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi.

The partnership marked a step toward the expansion of cricket in the Middle East, as well as Saudi Arabia's

sports growth, with Pakistan bringing decades of expertise in stadium design, construction, and cricket facility management.

Under the agreement, Islamabad and Riyadh would work jointly to plan the stadium, develop infrastructure, exchange technical expertise, and improve operational standards, so as to develop a modern and world-class cricket venue.

Speaking on the occasion, Prince Al Saud said that the partnership is not limited to the construction of a cricket stadium in Jeddah, but will prove to be the foundation for the long-term development of cricket in Saudi Arabia. The prince added that the project reflected a shared vision, strong partnership, and sustainable investment. He stated that the proposed stadium would play a significant role in enabling Saudi Arabia to host international cricket matches and major sporting events. Further, the project is expected to promote investment in sports, tourism, and communi-

ty engagement, which is in line with the goals of Saudi Vision 2030. Jeddah's new stadium could host international matches, regional tournaments, and training camps, with the project fitting into Riyadh's Vision 2030 strategy to diversify entertainment and sports infrastructure.

The collaboration strengthened sports diplomacy between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia beyond traditional ties. It could also create opportunities for Pakistani engineers, architects, coaches, and sports administrators. It may also attract international cricket boards to consider Saudi Arabia as a neutral venue, with success of the project potentially leading to more cricket infrastructure projects across the Middle East.

Naqvi arrived in Riyadh on July 1, where he also held talks with Saudi authorities regarding bilateral cooperation across various fields including security, drug prevention, and institutional cooperation.

President Zardari arrives in Kyrgyzstan for official visit to boost bilateral ties

PEAK POINT

ISSYK-KUL, KYRGYZSTAN: President Asif Ali Zardari on Monday arrived at Issyk-Kul International Airport for an official visit to the Kyrgyz Republic, where he was warmly received by Kyrgyz President Sadyr Japarov.

Upon his arrival, President Zardari was presented with a guard of honour at the airport, marking the beginning of his high-level visit aimed at strengthening bilateral ties between the two countries, a Presidency's news release said.

The visit is of particular significance as President Zardari becomes the first Pakistani head of state to visit Kyrgyzstan since the historic visit of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto in 1995. The trip is being viewed as an important step in continuing high-level engagement between



Islamabad and Bishkek.

During the visit, President Zardari and President Japarov are expected to hold comprehensive discussions on all aspects of bilateral relations and review cooperation across a wide range of sectors.

The two leaders will explore opportunities to enhance collaboration in trade, investment, energy, mining, agriculture, education, healthcare, tourism, the digital economy and people-to-people exchanges.

Regional connectivity and measures to further strengthen.

Cashless drive lifts digital merchants above 2 million

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: The Minister of State for Railways and Finance, Bilal Azhar Kayani, Monday, chaired a high-level meeting to review the first-year progress of its cashless economy initiative, highlighting strong growth in digital transactions, merchants and banking users.

The review highlighted significant progress across the digital payments ecosystem, with Annual digital transactions rose from 6.9 billion to 11.3 billion, said press release issued by finance ministry, adding the active digital payment merchants increasing from 0.5 million to over 2 million, supported by the government's Raast QR Code initiative, while digital banking users expanded to more than 135 million.

Launched in June 2025 under the direct supervision of the Prime Minister, the initiative is built on three core pillars: enhancing public convenience, promoting transparency, and accelerating the formal documentation of the economy through digital payments. Three sub-committees operate under the main Cashless Pakistan Committee, to execute the Prime Minister

directives under the program: Digital Payments – Innovation and Adoption led by Governor State Bank, Digital Public Infrastructure led Minister of IT & T, and Digitizing Government Payments led by Finance Secretary.

Kayani also noted encouraging progress in financial inclusion, which increased to 69 percent, while the gender gap continued to narrow through targeted interventions.

He further reviewed progress on public sector digitization, with 25 high-impact federal and provincial entities identified for complete digitization through Raast by December 2026. The minister noted the progress made on digitizing government to people (G2P) payments with approximately 75% digital payments acceptance at both centralized and self-accounting entities.

The Minister of State emphasized the importance of sustaining the momentum to further accelerate Pakistan's digital transformation. He reiterated the government's commitment to working closely with regulators, financial institutions, fintech companies, and the private sector to expand digital payments, strengthen financial inclusion, and support a transparent and documented economy.

Provocation concerning Indus River will not be tolerated: Minister Azma

PEAK POINT

LAHORE: Punjab Minister for Information Azma Bukhari said on Monday that India's BJP government had adopted a fascist approach. According to a press release issued here, she said that India believed that it could openly violate the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) and international laws governing water sharing without facing any accountability.

She said, "The Indian government's belief that no one can hold it accountable is a serious misconception." Narendra Modi and his supporters should remember that Pakistan has, in the past, dispelled many of India's misconceptions and possessed the full capability to take every necessary step to safeguard its national interests.

Azma Bukhari stated that the Indus River was the foundation of Pakistan's agriculture, economy and national survival. She said, "Any aggression against Pakistan's water resources or any violation of the Indus Waters Treaty is not only a breach of international law but is also tantamount to challenging Pakistan's sovereignty and territorial integrity."

Bilawal urges ownership and governance rights for Gilgit-Baltistan, AJK

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto has said that Gilgit-Baltistan and Kashmir will have to be given sovereignty and ownership rights. Addressing the oath-taking ceremony of the newly elected Chief Minister of Gilgit-Baltistan, Bilawal said his political vision centred on securing rights of ownership, governance and employment for the people of the region. Bilawal said the mandate of the people of Gilgit-Baltistan must be respected and that no one would be allowed to undermine their democratic choice. He expressed a desire to help ensure that the residents of Gilgit-Baltistan receive their constitutional rights. He said the people of Gilgit-Baltistan should become



the rightful owners of their land and added that he wished to see representatives from the region sitting in Pakistan's Parliament.

Bilawal argued that politics had increasingly been portrayed negatively in the country and stressed the need to set a positive example through democratic engagement and public service.

The PPP chairman said his party would work with opposition parties to promote development in Gilgit-Baltistan and pledged that no political worker.

Lalak Jan's unparalleled courage, unwavering devotion remain a source of pride for nation: Ayaz

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Speaker of National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq paid rich tribute to Havaldar Lalak Jan Shaheed (Nishan-e-Haider) on the occasion of his 27th martyrdom anniversary, saying that the valiant soldier laid down his life while defending the motherland.

He said that Havaldar Lalak Jan Shaheed's exemplary courage, unwavering sense of duty and supreme sacrifice have earned him an enduring place in the nation's history and remain a source of immense pride for every Pakistani.

Ayaz Sadiq said that on July 7, 1999, during the Kargil conflict,



Havaldar Lalak Jan Shaheed embraced martyrdom while bravely repelling repeated enemy attacks with exceptional courage, steadfastness and professional excellence.

Despite intense shelling and extremely challenging battlefield conditions, he continued to defend his post until his last breath.



ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Railways and Finance Bilal Azhar Kayani chaired a high level meeting to assess the on year progress of the Government's Cashless Pakistan initiative at Ministry of Finance.

Peace and development must go together in merged districts, says Governor Kundi

PEAK POINT

PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi on Monday said that lasting peace in the merged districts, particularly Waziristan, was inseparable from sustainable development, assuring tribal elders that he would take their concerns to the highest authorities. Talking to a North Waziristan jirga led by Noor Rehman Dawar at the Governor House, the Governor said Waziristan is his own area and reiterated that the Governor House would always remain open to the people of the tribal districts. He said the people of the erstwhile FATA had ren-

dered unparalleled sacrifices for the country and deserved lasting peace, development and improved public services. The Governor stressed to address the issues of the merged districts through consultation and consensus, saying only collective efforts could pave the way for mega development projects in the region. Referring to the constitutional merger of the tribal districts, Kundi said all powers had been transferred to the provincial government, urging the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government to effectively utilize the development funds allocated for the merged areas.

He said the annual Rs100



million allocation and the three percent share under the National Finance Commission (NFC) Award should be spent transparently for the welfare of the tribal population, adding that funds meant for the merged districts should not be diverted elsewhere.

The Governor also called

for addressing issues relating to taxes in the former FATA and PATA regions, high electricity tariffs, and the construction of dams to ensure affordable energy and water security.

Highlighting the economic potential of the province, Kundi said Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was rich in

minerals, oil, gas and tourism resources, but these sectors required a comprehensive mechanism and effective planning to fully benefit the people.

He emphasized the need to reopen border crossings with Afghanistan to promote bilateral trade and economic activity, saying enhanced trade would create employment opportunities and contribute to regional stability.

The Governor said NADRA facilitation centres have been established in the merged districts to improve access to essential public services. He added that issues such as CNG supply and wheat shortages had previ-

ously been resolved through consultation and cooperation among political parties.

Kundi said the Pakistan Peoples Party had always made sacrifices for the welfare of the people and would continue to raise its voice for the rights and development of the tribal districts.

Speaking on the occasion, members of the jirga said the people of Waziristan were facing severe hardships due to the deteriorating law and order situation, prolonged curfews and security challenges, including the growing threat posed by quadcopters. They said peace was directly linked with development and urged the Governor.