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PM Shehbaz, ADB VP discuss ‘early groundbreaking’ of strategic ML-1 project

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday stressed the need for early groundbreaking of the Main Line-1 (ML-1) railway corridor, describing it as a vital national infrastructure priority.

The prime minister made the remarks while hosting a breakfast meeting in honour of Asian Development Bank (ADB) Vice President for South, Central and West Asia Yingming Yang. The meeting reviewed the multi-decade development partnership between Pakistan and the ADB and priority interventions under the new Country Partnership Strategy (CPS) 2026-2030. Welcoming Yang on his first official visit to Pakistan in this capacity, PM Shehbaz lauded

the ADB's consistent professionalism and responsiveness in delivering urban infrastructure, transport and public service projects in the country. The prime minister said Pakistan has successfully navigated a difficult economic turnaround through rigorous fiscal, structural and governance reforms, which have restored macroeconomic stability and reinforced investor confidence.

He added that the reforms have also earned stable outlook upgrades from major international credit rating agencies, including Fitch, Moody's and S&P.

Reaffirming the government's commitment to long-term economic transformation, the premier said administrative bottlenecks were being actively dismantled through dedicated execution task forces.



ISLAMABAD: ADB Vice President Yingming Yang calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

AJK PM Iftikhar Gillani constitutes 8-member cabinet

PEAK POINT



MUZAFFARABAD: Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Prime Minister Iftikhar Gillani on Friday constituted a relatively small cabinet, appointing seven directly elected

and one indirectly elected lawmakers as ministers without portfolios.

The newly appointed ministers took oath at a ceremony held at the Presidency, with acting President Chaudhry Tariq Farooq administering the oath in the presence of Prime Minister Gillani. PML-N's regional president Shah Ghulam Qadir was also in attendance. Qadir, who had initially been tipped as the next prime minister, had opposed Gillani's nomination by the prime leadership and had not participated in the election of Gillani as leader of the house or his subsequent swearing-in ceremony on Aug 28. Those inducted into the cabinet are Raja Saqib Majeed and Dr Mustafa Bashir Abbasi from Muzaffarabad, Sardar Mir Akbar from Bagh, Raja Riasat and Raja Umair Naeem from Kotli, Waqar Noor from Bhimber and Chaudhry Azhar Sadiq from Mirpur.

Air India flight lost hydraulics, pilot fired after drug test

PEAK POINT

NEW DELHI: An Air India flight that injured passengers when it plunged midair last month suffered a temporary loss of hydraulic systems, investigators said on Friday, as the airline fired the captain who tested positive for psychoactive substances. The Airbus A320, carrying 137 passengers and eight crew, suddenly lost altitude on August 4 while flying from Phuket, Thailand, to New Delhi, injuring 24 people before stabilising and landing safely. India's civil aviation ministry classified it as a "Serious Incident".

Vance says US-Iran conflict is not a war despite renewed fighting

MAHPARA ZAMAN

WASHINGTON: US Vice President JD Vance on Thursday ruled out calling the conflict with Iran a war, despite renewed attacks and a growing military presence in the Middle East, stressing the challenge the Trump administration faces as the hostilities enter their seventh month and midterm elections loom. His comments come as Washington and Tehran exchanged back-and-forth attacks this week after a period of relative calm, with no diplomatic talks with the Iranians underway to end the conflict.

The war has dragged down President Donald Trump's approval ratings and driven up gas prices, raising the stakes for Republican candidates fighting to preserve their party's narrow congressional majorities in November.

In a briefing at the White House, Vance touted US



efforts to facilitate oil shipping through the Strait of Hormuz, where Iranians have disrupted maritime traffic since the war started, crediting Washington's actions with helping to avert a broader global energy crisis. He pushed back on describing the conflict as a "war," saying the US has ended major combat operations with Iran, despite renewed fighting this week. He said Washington's focus

now was to ensure Tehran

cannot keep disrupting commercial oil shipping. "I wouldn't call it a war," Vance said. "Right now there's no active shooting. I recognise there's been places where this has flared up."

The US maintains more than 50,000 troops in the Middle East. The Trump administration has surged assets into the region, including nearly 20 warships focused on a blockade. In some instances, troops have been deployed for

longer than expected and have been pulled from Europe and the Indo-Pacific.

Asked repeatedly about the timeline on the war, Vance said an end would require a halt in Iranians shooting at commercial shipping.

"When will the Iranians stop shooting at ships? I think the reality is I don't know the answer to that question," he said.

He also ruled out any negotiations as long as Tehran continued to target commercial shipping.

While the most intense fighting has subsided, the recurring exchange of fire and the lack of a definitive end to the war have kept global oil prices elevated.

On Tuesday, the United States launched air strikes on Iran, hitting what it said were military targets along the coast in retaliation for Iranian attacks on shipping in the Strait of Hormuz.

Security forces kill 48 terrorists in ‘high-tempo’ Balochistan operations over 72 hours: ISPR

PEAK POINT



RAWALPINDI: Security forces have killed 48 terrorists in multiple "high-tempo" anti-terror operations across Balochistan over the past three days, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said on Friday.

According to the military's media wing, the operations were carried out in Mastung, Quetta, Kalat and Sibi districts against "Indian proxies, Fitna-al-Hindustan and Fitna-al-Khawarij".

The state uses the term Fitna-al-Khawarij for the banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and has designated Balochistan-based groups as Fitna-al-Hindustan to highlight India's alleged role in terrorism and destabilisation across Pakistan.

In an intelligence-based operation (IBO) in Mastung district on Friday, security forces identified the movement of terrorists and engaged them. Six "Indian-sponsored terrorists" were killed in the ensuing exchange of fire, the ISPR said. A cache of ammunition and improvised explosive devices (IEDs) was also recovered and destroyed during the operation, it added.

In another IBO in the Shaban area of Quetta district, security forces identified "four khawarij hideouts". Following an exchange of fire, 26 terrorists were killed, according to the ISPR. In Kalat district, security forces raided a terrorist hideout, killing two terrorists in the ensuing fire-fight, the military said.

Pakistan rejects India's ‘false, politically motivated’ claims over Narowal temple

PEAK POINT



ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Friday rejected India's "false and politically motivated assertions" regarding damage to a Hindu temple in Narowal, saying the building

was damaged in torrential rains.

The rebuttal comes after the Indian foreign ministry said it had noted with "deep concern" the reports about the alleged destruction of the historic Hindu temple in Adda Siraj, an area of Punjab's Narowal district.

"We categorically reject the false and politically motivated assertions made by the Indian Ministry of External Affairs regarding the Hindu temple at Adda Siraj, Narowal," FO Spokesperson Sajjad Haider Khan said. According to the FO spokesperson, the temple's structure was damaged on July 21 due to torrential rains, unlike the false propaganda being peddled by India. "The local authorities have already surveyed the rain damage and initiated steps for the restoration of the building," Khan said, terming it "shameful" that India was distorting facts and resorting to "cheap gimmicks".

Close contest expected between PPP, independent candidate in Saturday's Skardu by-election



PEAK POINT

GILGIT: A close contest between a PPP and an independent candidate is expected as the by-election in the GBA-09 (Skardu-III) constituency is set for Saturday.

The GB Election Commission had announced the by-election in the constituency after the GB Supreme Appellate Court had disqualified PPP candidate Fida Muhammad Nashed, who had been notified as a returned candidate in the June polls.

Nashed's son, Akhtar Abbas, will now contest the elections on PPP's ticket, while Mohammad Ajmal will be in the field from PML-N. Former minister Mohammad Saleem, who is contesting as an independent, will also be among 10 candidates who have filed their nomination papers.



SPORTS



Hesson says Pakistan players used to 'chaos' after shake-up



PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Interim Pakistan head coach Mike Hesson hopes his drastically revamped squad can come through some all too familiar "chaos" with a much-improved showing against England in next week's third and final Test in Birmingham.

Pakistan suffered an innings and 103-run loss in the series opener at Headingley before going down by 194 runs at Lord's on Sunday as England took an unbeatable 2-0 lead in the three-match campaign.

The Pakistan Cricket Board responded to those defeats in dra-

matic fashion, taking the extraordinary step of sending seven players home, calling up another seven and replacing sacked Test coach Sarfaraz Ahmed with Hesson, already Pakistan's white-ball boss.

Senior players Imam-ul-Haq and Salman Ali Agha -- Pakistan's captain at Headingley when Babar Azam was injured -- were among those told to leave.

Left-arm spin bowler Ali Usman, who claimed a five-wicket haul at Headingley, and seamer Khuram Shahzad were also sent home. Of the seven replacements,

only batsmen Saim Ayub and

Abdullah Fazal have Test experience.

Hesson, however, feels the whole squad can now unite and give a better account of themselves when the third Test at Edgbaston starts on September 9.

The New Zealander had recently been in Japan preparing for the Asian Games and was only due to travel to the UK for the squad's audience with King Charles, which took place Wednesday.

"I was heading over to see the King and be part of a nice occasion. That got expedited," Hesson told reporters at Edgbaston on

Friday, as quoted by the BBC.

"The last couple of days have been challenging for being in a hotel with some players coming, some players going and then the arrival of everyone.

"The guys are probably more used to a little bit of chaos than I am. There is no doubt they have been disappointed, incredibly disappointed.

"We have had to park that and go 'righto, where to from here?' They have been really good over the past couple of days."

Hesson added: "I don't think anyone wants this to happen in the middle of a series.

'Not finished': Naqvi defends Pakistan cricket amid backlash over England Test shake-up



MOHSIN ALI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) chairman Mohsin Naqvi on Friday pushed back against criticism of Pakistan cricket, citing improvements in the national team's ODI ranking and success rate while acknowledging that defeats warrant scrutiny.

Taking to PCB official handle on X, Naqvi said, "We were ranked eighth in ODIs, and are now fifth. Out of six ODI series, we have won four. But still, our cricket is 'finished'.

"Our success rate has gone up from 24 percent to 73 percent and I am not talking about a specific match. But still, there is criticism that our cricket is finished." He said the figures were verifiable and urged an end to criticism that could demotivate players. "These are facts that can be checked and verified. But the way everyone is demotivating the players, this should be stopped," the PCB chairman said.

Naqvi added that criticism was justified when Pakistan lost, but objected to portraying individual defeats as evidence that the country's cricket was finished.

"When we lose a game, everyone has the right to criticise and discuss the reasons for the loss. But people portray it as Pakistan cricket being finished," he said. He also expressed confidence in the team's plans to challenge stronger sides.

England announce 15-member squad for third Test against Pakistan



PEAK POINT

ENGLAND: England have announced a 15-member squad for the third and final Test against Pakistan, making two changes to the squad for the series decider.

Brydon Carse and Matthew Fisher have been left out, while

young batter Sonny Duckett, Emilio Gay, Baker has been included in the Pope, Robinson, Smith and Josh Tongue.

The 15-member squad will be led by Joe Root and the third includes Jofra will begin on September 9 at Edgbaston. Shoaib Bashir, Harry Brook, Ben

already secured an unassailable 2-0 lead in the three-match series. Pakistan will look to win the final Test and finish the series on a positive note.

Meanwhile, the Pakistan cricket team has arrived in Birmingham for the final Test. Abdullah Fazal, Arafat Minhas and Imran Randhawa have also joined the national squad.

Pakistan are scheduled to hold their first training session at Edgbaston Cricket Ground at 9:30am on September 4 as they begin preparations for the series finale.

Ex-Pakistan coach Gillespie tells Javed 'look in the mirror' over sackings



PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Former Pakistan coach Jason Gillespie said on Friday that Pakistan's selectors should "look at himself in the mirror" with the national team "playing with fear".

In a shock move,



Pakistan this week replaced head coach Sarfaraz Ahmed and pace-bowling chief Umar Gul, and sent seven players home from England, in a dramatic response to successive Test thrashings. Australia's Gillespie, who led the side for eight months

goes from captaining the team in the first Test against England to out of the team for the second Test and on the plane home before the third Test.

"How does that work?"

He laid the blame firmly at the door of Javed.

"It's pretty clear they don't have a selection strategy at all, particularly under Aaqib Javed. They change their mind like they change their pants -- daily," he said. "Aaqib Javed came out recently and blamed (former Pakistan white-ball coach) Gary Kirsten and myself for everything that is going on.

Pakistan's road to Beijing begins at Islamabad Club

Eleven corporate sides contest WCGC national final; winner to fly the flag at October world championship

BY ARIF MEHMOOD

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan returns to the world corporate golf map on Saturday when 11 company teams, qualified through regional rounds, tee off at Islamabad Club for the MariEnergies World Corporate Golf Challenge (WCGC) 2026 National Final -- the last domestic step on what organisers are calling the country's "Road to Beijing." The winners will represent Pakistan at the 33rd WCGC World Final, to be staged from 19 to 23 October at Beijing Qinghe Bay Golf Country Club. The global championship draws amateur corporate pairings from more

than 30 countries. Details were set out on Thursday at a press conference at the Marriott Hotel, Islamabad, by Adeed Khan, chief executive of Reliance Golf (Pvt) Ltd, official licensee of the WCGC Pakistan chapter through 2030. Mari Energies Limited is title sponsor of the International Series. "WCGC gives Pakistan's business leaders a structured path to compete, connect and represent the country on a recognised global stage," Mr Khan told reporters, framing the event as more than a club tournament: a meeting point of sport, commerce and diplomacy. Saturday's field



will be widened by two invitationals. A Diplomatic Invitational is expected to include missions from the United States, Australia, Belgium, Poland, Portugal, Japan, Malaysia, Indonesia, Vietnam and other countries. A Corporate Invitational will

bring in senior Pakistani executives who did not come through the qualifier route. The national final will also mark the first visit to Pakistan by WCGC chairman José Guerra. International coach Claude May, accredited by the Professional Golf

Teachers Association of America, is scheduled to run a masterclass for senior corporate and diplomatic players. Reliance Golf, which launched the Pakistan chapter earlier this year after securing the executive partnership, staged qualifiers in cities including Multan, Lahore and Islamabad. Organisers say the long licence to 2030 is intended to "institutionalise" corporate golf rather than treat it as a one-off hospitality day. For Mari Energies, the title sits alongside its existing presence on the Islamabad Club calendar. The listed energy company said its sup-

port was meant to project Pakistani professionalism abroad and to deepen ties between local business and the diplomatic community stationed in the capital. The WCGC format is built around amateur company teams, typically pairs, rather than touring professionals. National champions from each chapter advance to the world week in Beijing, where championship rounds will be played on the members-only Chaoyang Course. Play at Islamabad Club on 5 September will decide which Pakistani pairing makes that journey.

Uraan Pakistan faces target miss as senate demands visible progress

NADEEM TANOLI

ISLAMABAD: The Senate Standing Committee on Planning, Development and Special Initiatives has questioned whether the targets set under Uraan Pakistan are being matched by real progress, demanding clear timelines and visible work on major development projects including ML 1, Rohri Nawabshah railway connectivity and the proposed Gwadar railway link. The committee, chaired by Senator Qurat-ulain Marri, reviewed the progress of

Uraan Pakistan, the government's long term economic plan up to 2035, along with the 13th Five Year Plan and the annual and PSDP plans for 2026 to 2027. Officials presented economic targets for the coming years, investment, inflation, exports, remittances, IT exports and the debt to GDP ratio. The committee also questioned the current account position and whether the government was moving towards its Uraan Pakistan target. Officials said the gap was linked to higher workers'

remittances and expected the current account balance to move closer to the planned target in the coming years. A major part of the meeting focused on railway projects presented as important parts of the country's development vision. Senator Shahadat Awan questioned the progress of ML 1, the railway connection between Rohri and Nawabshah, and the proposed railway link to Gwadar. Officials said negotiations on the projects were continuing according to the Prime Minister's directions. However, Senator Shahadat

Awan warned that negotiations by themselves could not be counted as real progress. He demanded clear timelines and visible advancement so that major projects included in the government's development plans move from discussions toward actual work. The committee also reviewed the proposed railway connectivity between Thar coal fields and Port Qasim. Officials told the committee that work on the project was in progress and was expected to be completed by the end of 2026. The meeting also looked at a policy

change that could directly affect millions of people with disabilities. The Ministry of Planning told the committee that universal accessibility and inclusivity requirements had been added to the revised PC 1 Proforma. This means accessibility for persons with disabilities is now expected to be considered when development projects are planned and approved, rather than being treated as an issue after a project has already been designed. The committee welcomed the change and noted that its recommendation made during an earlier meet-

ing had produced a major policy result by bringing accessibility considerations into the project planning stage. Chairperson Senator Qurat-ulain Marri said development plans should not remain only on paper and must create real facilities and opportunities for persons with disabilities. The committee said the change in the PC 1 process was a practical improvement and stressed that the same approach should be followed through the implementation of development projects.

PANAH Think Tank urges Government to expedite enactment of Front-of-Pack warning labels to protect public health

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: PANAH's Think Tank has urged the Government of Pakistan to expedite the enactment of mandatory Front-of-Pack Warning Labels (FOPWLs) on ultra-processed products containing excessive levels of sugar, sodium and unhealthy fats. The measure would enable consumers to quickly identify products that may pose health risks and make more informed and healthier food choices. The demand was made during the 5th meeting of PANAH's high-level think tank, chaired by Maj Gen (R) Masud Rehman Kiani,

President of PANAH, and attended by national and international health experts, policy makers, and civil society representatives. Participants expressed serious concern over the growing burden of heart disease, diabetes, obesity and other non-communicable diseases (NCDs) in Pakistan and called for urgent policy action to address unhealthy food environments. Maj Gen (R) Masud Rehman Kiani emphasized that consumers must have access to clear and understandable information about the food products they purchase. "Consumers have a right to know what they are eating. They should not need

to consult experts to understand whether a product contains excessive sugar, salt or unhealthy fats. A clear warning label on the front of the package can provide this information immediately and help people make informed food choices," he said. He further stressed that Pakistan should draw on the experience of countries that have already introduced front-of-pack warning labels. "The evidence and international experience are available. There is no justification for unnecessary delay while women and children continue to be exposed to unhealthy foods, putting their health and lives at risk.

Pakistan must take decisive action to protect its people, particularly children and young people, from unhealthy food environments," Maj Gen Kiani added. During the meeting, participants highlighted that the increasing availability and consumption of unhealthy foods, particularly ultra-processed products high in sugar, salt and unhealthy fats, is a leading contributor to the rising burden of diet related NCDs. They emphasized that mandatory FOPWLs can help consumers identify products high in nutrients of concern and support healthier food choices. "Ministry of National Health Services has already

submitted an evidence-based proposal to the PSQCA through the Ministry of Science and Technology. It has now been more than two years since the proposal was submitted, yet it remains under discussion while people continue to be exposed to the health risks associated with unhealthy diets," said Sana Ullah Ghumman, General Secretary, PANAH. The Think Tank therefore strongly recommended the urgent enactment and implementation of mandatory FOPWL national standards in Pakistan, ensuring that warning labels are clear, prominent and easy for consumers to understand.

They urged the Pakistan Standards and Quality Control Authority (PSQCA) and the Ministry of Science and Technology to move forward without further delay to make mandatory FOPWLs a reality and strengthen efforts to create much-needed healthier food environments in Pakistan. PANAH reaffirmed its commitment to working with the Government, health experts, researchers, Ulema, media and civil society to support the enactment of effective, comprehensive and evidence-based national FOPWL standards and other measures to prevent NCDs and protect public health in Pakistan.

Opinion & Letters

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A war without a mandate

Days after plunging his country into a war with Iran at the behest of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, US President Donald Trump claimed that hostilities would be over in four or five weeks. Instead, the war is now in its seventh month, oil prices are up, US GDP growth is down, and inflation has erased all wage growth over the past 12 months. Meanwhile, the Iranians continue to show great resilience despite heavy losses. US military readiness has been significantly depleted, and Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth has apparently fired a generation of senior military officers for daring to disagree with him on military strategy. Hegseth touts himself as an expert on warfare, though his active military service consists of a year as a prison guard, a few months as an infantryman in Iraq, and a stint as an instructor in Afghanistan. The men he fired had dozens of years each of active service in war zones. Hegseth also bankrupted a charity after allegedly embezzling from it, barred from serving as a guard for President Biden because of his suspected white nationalist sympathies, and successfully lobbied for war criminals to receive presidential pardons. And since he is a Trump sycophant, it apparently makes him the only person qualified to run the US military.

The Day the Sky Took an Oath

By: Izmi Herlani

On the morning of 06 September 1965, Pakistan did not wake to an ordinary sunrise. It woke to the rumble of armour, the shock of invasion and a question aimed at the heart of a young nation: Would Pakistan stand? The answer came from trenches, bridges, command posts, factory floors, hospital wards and homes where mothers prayed with trembling hands. But it also came from above, from the fierce roar of jet engines slicing through the sky. That roar was Pakistan's answer. It said Lahore would not be abandoned. It said fear would not dictate the future. It said a smaller force would never become a smaller spirit. And it said Pakistan would fight. When the enemy advanced with the confidence of numbers, Pakistan Air Force rose with the confidence of purpose. In September 1965, PAF did not merely fly the flag. It flew the will of a nation. It carried the hopes of soldiers on the ground, the prayers of families at home and the uncompromising edge of a people determined to remain free. This is why Defence Day is not simply the remembrance of a war. It is the remembrance of a standard. A Young Force, an Ancient Resolve. Pakistan was still a young state in 1965, and its Air Force was barely 18 years old. It was transitioning into the jet age. Air Marshal Nur Khan had assumed command only weeks before the September conflict. Across the border stood a numerically superior adversary. The challenge was immense: the margin for error was narrow. But PAF did not allow numbers to become a verdict. It lived the Qaid-e-Azam's injunction: "Second to None." That was not a claim of possessing more aircraft or more resources. It was a refusal to accept second-rate planning, second-rate training, second-rate courage or second-rate sacrifice. A nation may possess fewer machines, but it need never possess a smaller will. In the autumn of 1965, every Sabre became more than metal. Every runway became more than concrete. Every cockpit became a sacred post of duty. Pakistan's airmen were not simply defending airspace; they were defending the confidence of a nation. Chhamb: The First Thunderbolt The aerial war began with a message delivered over Chhamb on 01 September. Indian aircraft attacked Pakistani Army positions. The call for air support was urgent which PAF answered without hesitation. Two F-86 Sabres,



flown by Squadron Leader Sarfaraz Rafique and Flight Lieutenant Intiaz Bhatti, were scrambled against four Indian Vampire fighters. In the ensuing dog-fight, all four Vampires were brought down. The effect was immediate: India withdrew 130 Vampire aircraft from frontline service. It was not merely an aerial victory. It was psychological warfare in its purest form. In minutes, PAF transformed the enemy's confidence into caution. Chhamb told the world that Pakistan's skies were not an open corridor for aggression. They were a frontier guarded by PAF Shaheens who knew their mission and trusted their skill. The enemy had tested the air. PAF answered with fire. When Lahore Called Then came 06 September. The international border was crossed. The danger was no longer distant. Lahore, the city of poetry, culture, memory and national pride, stood threatened. But Lahore did not stand alone. As Indian armour and infantry pressed towards the BRB Canal, PAF F-86 Sabres took to the air on close-support missions. Flying low and fast, Pakistani pilots struck advancing enemy formations and helped disrupt the offensive directed toward Lahore. Their action made a major contribution to the city's successful defence. For the soldier on the ground, the sight of a Sabre overhead was not merely tactical support. It was a promise: you will not fight alone. For the invader, it was an unmistakable warning: this land is defended from the soil to the sky. The defence of Lahore was not the achievement of one arm alone. The Army held the line with courage. Civilians stood with remarkable resolve. PAF made sure the enemy's advance was contested not only at the canal, but on the ground. In that shared resistance lay Pakistan's real strength: Unity under Fire. Pathankot: Taking the War to the Source A defensive war does not mean a passive war. PAF understood that protecting Pakistani cities required more than ammunition; it required the presence of them. It required striking the airfields from which danger would emerge. On 06 September, PAF aircraft carried out a bold dusk raid on Pathankot airfield, destroying several Indian aircraft on the ground, including MIG-21s, Mysteres and a C-119 transport. Strikes against

other airfields, including Adampur and Halwara, compounded the pressure on Indian air operations. The raid carried a message of strategic clarity: Pakistan would not let the enemy choose the time, place and rhythm of the conflict. An airfield is not merely a strip of tarmac. It is a launchpad for aggression. Deny the enemy the use of that launchpad and you protect your own soldiers, cities and skies. PAF did precisely that. It seized the initiative, disrupted hostile plans and compelled the adversary to think first of defence. Sardogha: Where Legends Rose On 07 September, Indian aircraft launched large-scale attacks against PAF Base Sardogha. It was an attempt to strike at the heart of Pakistan's air defence capability. The answer became one of the most celebrated episodes in the history of Pakistan's aerial warfare. Then Squadron Leader Muhammad Mahmood Alam led an interception against Indian Hawker Hunters and was credited with shooting down five aircraft in a single mission. His name became inseparable from the courage, composure and combat skill displayed by PAF in 1965. Yet, the legend of M Alam is also the story of an institution. Behind every aircraft that climbed into battle stood radar controllers, engineers, armourers, technicians, ground crews and commanders. The pilot was visible in the sky, but the nation's resolve worked from the ground upward. That was PAF's deeper strength: individual courage made formidable by collective professionalism. War Beyond the Dogfight PAF's contribution was not limited to dramatic aerial engagements. It fought a complete air campaign: air defence, airfield strikes, close support, interdiction and night bombing. PAF B-57 Canberra bombers conducted night missions against Indian airfields and other targets. In darkness, over hostile territory, their crews had to rely on discipline, navigation and courage. These missions placed pressure on the enemy beyond the front line and demonstrated that Pakistan's striking reach did not fade after sunset. PAF aircraft also targeted transport, railway wagons carrying ammunition, arms and supplies and other military assets. Such strikes attacked the enemy's capacity to sustain its offensive. An army advances on honour, logistics, reinforcements and supplies; interrupt those arteries, and its momentum begins to falter. PAF's strikes behind the tank, the rail line behind the

gun and the runway behind the raid. The Night Was Guarded Too Pakistan's vigil did not end with daylight. On 21 September, Squadron Leader Jamal A Khan, flying an F-104 Starfighter on night air-defence alert, intercepted an Indian Canberra near Fazilka at 22,000 feet. He fired an AIM-9B Sidewinder missile, which struck the bomber. The mission is described in the source document as the only confirmed night missile kill by an F-104 worldwide. Its symbolism was immense. The darkness did not belong to the intruder. Pakistan's defenders were alert, armed and ready. The sky had no blind hour. PAF also contributed to the maritime dimension of the war by maintaining air cover over coastal areas, helping protect Karachi and supporting Pakistan Navy's operational posture. Its strike on Indian naval radar and port facilities at Okha on 08 September complemented Operation Dwarka and reflected the unity of Pakistan's armed forces in a national crisis. Defence Day's Living Mementos PAF paid a price. It lost 12 F-86 Sabres, one F-104 Starfighter and three B-57 bombers in combat. Behind those numbers were PAF Shaheens who accepted the ultimate risk because Pakistan stood behind them. Their sacrifice must never become a mere ceremonial phrase. Defence Day calls upon every Pakistani to remember that freedom is protected by preparedness, unity, discipline and an unyielding sense of duty. The heroes of 1965 did not possess ideal circumstances. They possessed something greater: the determination to make difficult circumstances yield to professional excellence. They showed that courage is not noise. It is composure when danger approaches. They showed that patriotism is not a slogan. It is service when sacrifice is required. They showed that Pakistan's strength is not only in its weapons, but in the character of its people. On this Defence Day, let the nation remember those who rose into the sky when Pakistan needed them most. Let us remember the Sabres over Chhamb, the strikes that helped save Lahore, the bold raid on Pathankot, the steel spirit of Sardogha and the sentinels who guarded even the night. In September 1965, PAF did not merely defend Pakistan's airspace. It defended Pakistan's honour. And through the roar of its wings, it declared a truth that still burns in the national heart: Pakistan may be challenged, but it will never be tested. But Pakistan will never be broken.

Khichi stresses global promotion of Pakistan's literary, intellectual heritage



PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for National Heritage and Culture, Aurangzeb Khan Khichi Friday stressed the need for effective promotion of Pakistan's national language, literature and intellectual heritage at the international level.

During his visit to the National Language Promotion Department (NLPD), the minister directed the relevant authorities to effectively showcase the scholarly and research work of the institution both nationally and internationally, enabling the

world to better understand its intellectual contributions and role in promoting Pakistan's languages and literature. He said important books published in Urdu should be translated into other languages and intellectual works should not remain confined to different cities within the country but should also be organized at the international level, particularly in Central Asian countries.

Aurangzeb Khan Khichi directed that books on the history and culture of Central Asian countries that have

already been translated into Urdu should also be displayed at such exhibitions. He stressed that books authored by the presidents and prominent personalities of these countries should also be highlighted.

He further said books covering Pakistan's culture, history and civilization, which have been translated into Russian, Azerbaijani, Uzbek and Persian, should also be promoted internationally as part of Pakistan's cultural and literary outreach. The minister expressed satisfaction over the performance of the institution and put forward various proposals aimed at further improving its effectiveness. He stressed the need to adopt measures in line with modern requirements for the promotion of the national language and literature. He also congratulated Executive Director NLPD Dr. Rashid Hameed on the inclusion of five textbooks authored by him in the academic curriculum and appreciated his scholarly, literary, research and teaching contributions.

Govt, agriculture sector join hands to turn Pakistan's farm economy into high-value export engine

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: The government has brought together agriculture sector stakeholders to formulate a roadmap aimed at increasing Pakistan's high-value agricultural exports, with a particular focus on processing, certification, traceability, branding and access to international markets. Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Ahsan Iqbal made the remarks while chairing the third session of the Strategic Dialogue Series on "Unlocking Pakistan's High-Value Export Potential," held with key stakeholders from the agriculture sector here Friday. Coordinator to the Prime Minister on Commerce and Industry Rana Ahsan also attended the session. Ahsan Iqbal has called for a major transformation of Pakistan's agriculture sector, urging a shift from exports of raw commodities to high-value, certified, processed and branded products to unlock billions of dollars in additional export potential. The roundtable brought together around 100 participants, including representa-

tives of federal and provincial institutions, agricultural and engineering universities, chambers of commerce, trade associations, certification agencies, exporters and growers associated with meat, poultry, dairy, rice, dates, horticulture, olive and organic products. Ahsan Iqbal said that the purpose of the dialogue series was to move beyond traditional consultations and establish a practical partnership among government, industry, academia and research institutions to address sector-specific challenges. He pointed out that agriculture contributed nearly one-fourth of Pakistan's Gross Domestic Product and provided employment to around 37 percent of the country's labour force, yet its contribution to exports remains disproportionately low. Coordinator to the Prime Minister on Commerce and Industry Rana Ahsan said agricultural products account for nearly 22 percent of Pakistan's exports but remain heavily concentrated in raw commodities, leaving the sector vulnerable to international price fluctuations and external shocks.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning, Development & Special Initiatives Ahsan Iqbal chairs the third session of the Strategic Dialogue series on "Unlocking Pakistan's High-Value Export Potential", a roundtable conference with agriculture sector stakeholders.

Shaza Fatima to attend opening ceremony of LEAP 2026 in Riyadh

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication Shaza Fatima will attend the opening ceremony of LEAP 2026 in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

During the visit, the federal minister will deliver a keynote address.

Shaza Fatima Khawaja will also formally inaugurate the Pakistan Pavilion at the technology event.

As part of her visit, an important meeting related to the Pakistan Compute Consortium will also be held.

The federal minister will visit the Pakistan and Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (MCIT) pavilions and stalls established at LEAP 2026.

She is also scheduled to hold an important bilateral meeting with the Governor of the Saudi Digital Government Authority.

During her visit, the federal minister will also hold meetings with other important personalities.

DPM, Ambassador Otunnu discuss evolving global landscape

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador Olara Otunnu, candidate for the position of Secretary-General of the United Nations, along with Ruhakana Rugunda, Special Envoy of the President and former Prime Minister of Uganda, called on Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Muhammad Ishaq Dar on Friday. They exchanged views on the evolving global landscape and challenges facing the multilateral system.

The DPM/FM underscored Pakistan's longstanding commitment to multilateralism and stressed the need to strengthen the system, including through effective implementation of understandings and decisions reached in multilateral fora.

He reiterated the importance of respect for international law



and implementation of UNSC resolutions, particularly regarding the disputes of Palestine and Jammu & Kashmir.

The DPM/FM expressed the hope that the next UN Secretary-General would play an effective role in strengthening the UN's capacity to address contemporary global challenges.

Ambassador Otunnu appreciated Pakistan's longstanding contribution to international peace and security, including as part of UN peacekeeping operations.

Revenues grew by 40% over last two years: Aurangzeb

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister of Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb has reaffirmed the government's full support for privatization and public-private partnerships to mobilize private capital. Addressing an event organized by Asian Development Bank in Islamabad on Friday, Senator Aurangzeb outlined the government's core priorities including enabling the private sector to drive economic growth, staying the course on structural reforms and preventing a return to boom-and-bust cycles. Highlighting fiscal progress, the finance minister noted that revenues have grown by 40 percent over the last two years, while efforts to curb expenditures remain ongoing. Aurangzeb stated that the tax-to-GDP ratio currently



stands at 10.03 percent with a short-term target of reaching 11 to 12 percent. Expressing satisfaction over the tech sector, he noted that IT exports reached 4.6 billion dollars during the last fiscal year, with freelancers contributing 1.6 billion dollars. Aurangzeb said their target is to register an economic growth rate of over four percent for the current fiscal year. He said foreign exchange reserves stood at 18.5 billion dollars as of 30th June, with a target to reach 21 billion dollars by the end of this fiscal year.

Case against two people for alleged power theft, misbehavior with MEPCO team

REPORT WAJIAH TAMSEEL MIRZA

MULTAN: Makhdoom Rashid Police Station has registered a case against Muhammad Nasir son of Akhtar Ali and Imran Jatt for alleged power theft and misbehavior with MEPCO officials in the area of 19 Kasi Vehari Road. According to the FIR, Muhammad Nasir son of Akhtar Ali was allegedly charged with power theft, while during the MEPCO team's operation on the spot, Imran Jatt allegedly misbehaved with MEPCO officials and interfered with the government

vehicle. According to the report, the MEPCO team had reached 19 Kasi Vehari Road to check power theft. When a situation arose during the operation, the MEPCO officials approached the police. Makhdoom Rashid Police Station registered a case on the complaint of MEPCO official Muhammad Waqas Anwar and started action under sections 353/186. According to the police, further investigation into the incident is underway.



PPPs, privatization critical to Pakistan's future economic growth: Muhammad Ali

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Adviser to the Prime Minister on Privatization and Chairman, Privatization Commission Muhammad Ali on Friday said that the public-private partnerships (PPPs) and privatization were critical instruments for the future economic growth of the country.

Addressing Mobilizing Private Capital: National Strategic Dialogue on PPPs and Privatization, which was organized by the Asian Development Bank, the Adviser stressed the need

for massive investment, management discipline, skilled human resources and innovation. The country needed massive investments in infrastructure and basic human needs, skilled human resources, management discipline and innovation to remain relevant in the future global economy, he said adding that local infrastructure requirements would increase significantly as the population was projected to rise from around 230 million currently to approximately 390 million by 2050, with around 190 million people expected to live in

urban centers. "This increases the requirement in the urban infrastructure by roughly 100 percent," he said, adding that Pakistan would need to develop more hospitals, schools, energy and water infrastructure, railways, airports and ports.

The Adviser said the government alone could not finance the country's growing infrastructure requirements, particularly given Pakistan's relatively low savings rate of around 14 percent compared with 32 percent in Vietnam and 40 percent in China.

Muhammad Ali said pri-

vatization was equally important from the perspective of management, as companies established to earn should not continue consuming public money and should be managed by the private sector. He added that the private sector could bring capital, management capabilities, innovation and better services while introducing systems to reduce revenue leakage and improve operational performance.

Referring to the Pakistan Public-Private Partnership Monitor, he said around 154 PPP projects worth approxi-

mately \$36 billion had reached financial close since 1990, demonstrating Pakistan's capacity to deliver such projects. He said the country's PPP portfolio was ranked among the top 14 in the developing world by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and among the top 10 when measured against the size of Pakistan's economy. Muhammad Ali said Pakistan already had the necessary legal and regulatory framework, with the Federal PPP Authority Act enacted in 2017 and all four provinces having their own PPP laws and institutions.

He said the Federal PPP Authority, branded as P3A, was being consolidated under the Privatization Division to bring PPPs, asset monetization and privatization under one roof, which would simplify procedures, improve investor coordination and enhance efficiency.

He said the current PPP pipeline comprised 38 projects worth around \$6.5 billion across roads, railways, hospitals, hospitality, aviation and industrial estates, but stressed that the pipeline needed to be expanded significantly.