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PM Shehbaz urges shift from economic stabilisation to growth, job creation and export promotion

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday stressed the need to focus on sustainable economic growth, job creation and export promotion, saying the country had successfully restored macroeconomic stability through a collaborative effort. Addressing the gong ceremony in Karachi virtually to celebrate the listing of the Naya Nazimabad Apartment REIT scheme, the prime minister lauded the joint efforts of the federal and provincial governments and financial institutions in steering the economy out of severe challenges. Recalling his recent interactions with international bankers and financial leaders in New York and London, including executives from Citibank, JPMorgan and Barclays

and the managing director of the IMF, the prime minister said global financial institutions had commended Pakistan's implementation of long-overdue structural reforms, which had created an attractive ecosystem for investment. He particularly thanked the finance minister, cabinet members, the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) and federal secretaries for establishing a replicable model of teamwork that had helped achieve macroeconomic stability and put Pakistan back on the path to sustainable development. He said the successful implementation of reforms and restoration of macroeconomic stability were the result of a cohesive partnership between the political hierarchy and military leadership working in harmony.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif attends the Gong ceremony for Naya Nazimabad Apartments REIT listing on Pakistan Stock Exchange.

22 dead as Pakistan airstrikes annihilate terrorists' camps in Afghanistan

PEAK POINT



RAWALPINDI: The Pakistan military has carried out a string of well-planned and calibrated aerial attacks against the safe havens of terrorists belonging to Indian-sponsored Fitna

al-Khwarizj and Fitna al-Hindustan, killing 22 of them.

In a statement issued on Thursday morning, the Federal Ministry for Information and Broadcasting said the air attacks were launched in continuation of operation Ghazab lil Haq and Pakistan's resolve to eliminate terrorists, their networks and supporters. The statement said the air strikes were well-planned and calibrated against the hideouts and safe havens of terrorists organisations of Fitna al-Khwarizj and Fitna al-Hindustan killing multiple terrorists. Based on credible intelligence, selective targeting of terrorist camps and hideouts at two locations belonging to Fitna al-Khwarizj, Fitna al-Hindustan and their affiliates has been carried out in Afghanistan with precision and accuracy, the statement said and added targets were destroyed with precision and initial reports suggested killing of 22 terrorists.

Large quantities of weapons and ammunition stored at these hideouts were also destroyed.

DG ISPR lampoons Indian military's false-flag claims, presents 'neutralised terrorist' in press conference

PEAK POINT



RAWALPINDI: Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) Director General Lt Gen Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry is currently speaking about "another false-flag" operation by India.

The press conference comes after Indian media reported that an individual wanted in connection with the April 22 Pahalgam terrorist attack last year had been killed during an "encounter" in Indian Illegally Occupied Kashmir's Korag area.

Addressing the media, DG ISPR said he would talk "about a so-called terrorist incident, a false flag that has been staged by the Indian political military". He presented a five-point timeline, showing that the whole scenario began on Sep 29. "On the night of Sep 29, the Indian corps deployed in IIOK made a tweet, claiming that, based on joint intelligence reports, the Indian Army, police and CRPF launched an operation in general area of Korag, Yousmarg," he read from a social media post by Chinara Corps. The DG ISPR then referred to another post by Chinara Corps on Sept 20 morning that claimed the Indian forces had found the body of a "Lashkar-e-Taiba terrorist".

The military spokesperson noted that later, India's ANI news outlet claimed that the deceased had been identified as Mohammad Asif, who had been inducted into the Special Services Group (SSG).

The DG ISPR went on to say that India's Indian Home Affairs and Press Information Bureau also reiterated the supposed details.

Pakistan condemns India at UN council over occupied Kashmir, minority rights

PEAK POINT



ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Thursday condemned New Delhi of evading questions on human rights in occupied Kashmir and the treatment of minorities.

Exercising the right of reply to India at the 63rd session of the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva, First Secretary Adeel M. Khokhar said India had adopted a "familiar pattern" of changing the subject and invoking Pakistan when confronted with uncomfortable facts. "Let us make it clear: Jammu and Kashmir is not, and has never been, an integral part of India. It is a disputed territory, as recognised by the relevant Security Council resolutions. Repeated denials and unilateral measures cannot alter this reality," he said. Khokhar said India had for over seven decades avoided holding a free and impartial plebiscite under UN auspices in Jammu and Kashmir. "A state confident in its claim would not fear the people it claims to govern," he added. Khokhar highlighted that extrajudicial killings, arbitrary detention and torture of Kashmiris by Indian forces had been documented in international reports, such as by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

UAE says investigation launched into diverted flydubai flight

PEAK POINT

DUBAI: The United Arab Emirates' chief prosecutor on Thursday ordered an investigation into the incident aboard flydubai flight FZ1073 from Dubai to Tel Aviv, which made an emergency landing in Saudi Arabia after a reported altercation in the cockpit. The state news agency WAM said the attorney general had ordered the probe, adding that "the investigation team has launched its work into the incident" that forced the plane to land in Saudi Arabia on Wednesday. The investigation will examine the circumstances and motives, including whether it was linked to any militant activity or involved prior planning or direction.

Opposition decides to contact federal govt, sets conditions for meeting PM

PEAK POINT

The development comes as Opposition parties continue Gohar condemned the detention of Imran Khan,



to discuss political engagement with the government at a time of tensions over the proposed long march and other political issues. During the meeting, the Opposition parties also reviewed preparation for PTI long march and discussed reports concerning the possible imposition of Governor's Rule in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. After the end of the meeting, PTI chairman Barrister

former PM and PTI founder chairman's sisters and the arrest of Opposition MNAs and MPAs. Gohar asserted that said the Opposition always stood with the state and Pakistan but alleged that its political voice had repeatedly been suppressed and also rejected descriptions of opposition members as a gang and agents of chaos. He maintained that a

stronger federation depended on provincial autonomy and warned that acting against the wishes of the people could weaken the federation.

He said the opposition would also convey these concerns to the Pakistan Peoples Party.

Gohar further said the opposition had approached the Supreme Court but claimed that its order had not been implemented. Despite the differences, he repeated that the opposition remained ready for negotiations.

Meanwhile, Opposition Leader in the Senate Allama Raja Nasir Abbas said political problems should be addressed through dialogue rather than force. He pointed to what he described as serious challenges facing Pakistan, including the deteriorating law.

PTI 'accepts' govt invitation for talks ahead of October 4 long march



PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan said on Thursday that his party had accepted the government's offer for talks ahead of its proposed long march on October 4. In a statement, Gohar said the government's message regarding the meeting had been received on Friday and was accepted in light of decisions taken during an opposition leaders' meeting earlier in the day.

He said representatives of the government and opposition would meet at 12pm tomorrow in the office of the National Assembly speaker. The PTI had earlier postponed its planned long march towards the federal capital from September 27 to October 4.



SPORTS



Pakistan beat Bangladesh to set up Asian Games cricket gold showdown with India



MOHSIN ALI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan defeated Bangladesh by six wickets in the first semi-final of the Asian Games men's cricket competition at Korogi Sports Club, Nisshin, on Thursday, booking a final clash with arch-rivals India.

Set to chase a daunting 112-run target in 13 overs, the Green Shirts comfortably knocked the winning runs for the loss of four wickets and three balls to spare.

The Green Shirts, however, got off to a contrasting start to the pursuit as they lost captain Sahibzada Farhan (one) in the first over with just six runs on the board.

His opening partner Maaz Sadaqat, who made a spirited start to his knock, which saw him smash two fours and a six, followed suit in the next over as he fell victim to Nasum Ahmed after scoring a seven-ball 15.

Following Sadaqat's dismissal, Saim Ayub walked out to bat at No.5 and made a similar start to his innings, hitting Mustafizur Rahman for two sixes and a four, but the experienced pacer hit back in the fourth over, sending him back to the pavilion for a 12-ball 21.

Usman Khan, who came out at No.3, was then involved in a brief

15-run partnership for the fourth wicket with Hasan Nawaz until getting dismissed by Rishad Hossain on the first delivery of the seventh over, with the scoreboard reading 53/4.

His dismissal paved the way for Abdul Samad to walk out at No.6, and the right-handed batter, alongside Nawaz, turned the game on its head with belligerent hitting.

The duo outclassed Bangladesh's bowling attack and ultimately steered Pakistan over the line with an unbeaten 69-run partnership, which came off just 32 deliveries.

Samad, who was the core

aggressor of the match-winning stand, top-scored for Pakistan with an unbeaten 30 off 15 deliveries, studded with five fours and a six, while Hasan contributed with 27 not out from 22 balls.

For Bangladesh, Mahedi Hasan, Rahman, Hossain and Ahmed could pick up a wicket apiece. In a match reduced to 13 overs per side due to a wet outfield, Pakistan captain Sahibzada Farhan won the toss and elected to field first, and Bangladesh, in response, accumulated 111/7 in their 20 overs. The Tigers got off to a cautious start to their innings with their opening pair.

Bashir fires Pakistan to shooting bronze at Asian Games



PEAK POINT

JAPAN: Ghulam Mustafa Bashir won bronze medal in the men's 25 metres rapid-fire pistol at the Asian Games in Nagoya on Wednesday, producing a strong performance in a tense eight-man final.

Bashir finished third with a score of 22, securing Pakistan a place on the podium at the Aichi Prefecture General Shooting Gallery.

This is the first medal from Bashir in his Asian Games career and the second for Pakistan in the continental event history. Kishmala Talat had won bronze in the previous Asian Games in Hangzhou.

South Korea's Lee Gunhyeok claimed the gold medal after scoring 32, edging China's Su Lianbofan in the shoot-off. Su also finished on 32 but took silver after the tie-break.

Vietnam's Pham Quang Huy finished fourth with 20 points, while Indonesia's Suteja Dewa Putu Yadi placed fifth on 18. South Korea's Yoon Seoyeong was sixth with 12, followed by India's Anish on 11 and Kazakhstan's Nikita Chiryukin on seven. Bashir had entered the final after finishing sixth in the second stage also on Thursday with 578 points, including 19 inner tens. He was among the eight shooters.

Pakistan fightback in vain as India win 4-3 in Asian Games hockey semi-final



PEAK POINT

JAPAN: Pakistan produced a stirring second-half fightback only to fall agonisingly short, losing 4-3 to arch-rivals India in a dramatic Asian Games hockey semi-final at the Gifu Prefectural Green Stadium on Thursday.

The Green Shirts, who finished second in Pool 'B' after a solitary defeat to Malaysia, recovered from a

three-goal deficit to level the scores, but a deflected strike from Abhishek with under a minute remaining ended their gold-medal hopes. Pakistan will now contest the bronze-medal match on Saturday, while defending champions India advance to the final and remain on course for a direct berth at the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics, which is awarded to the Asian Games gold medalists. India, who topped Pool 'A' undefeated with an extraordinary goal difference, struck early through captain Harmanpreet Singh. The drag-flick specialist converted penalty corners in the fifth minute and 13th minute to give his side a 2-0 cushion at the first break. Sukhjot Singh then extended the lead to 3-0 in the 23rd minute with a well-worked move involving Manpreet Singh and Shilanand Lakra.

ing Manpreet Singh and Shilanand Lakra.

Pakistan responded just before half-time when captain Abu Bakar Mahmood converted a penalty corner in the 30th minute to make it 3-1.

The third quarter saw Ammad Butt receive a yellow card in the 38th minute. Pakistan continued to press and reduced the deficit further when Abdul Hannan Shahid scored in the 45th minute, capitalising on defensive lapses. Dilpreet Singh was shown a green card around the same period. Early in the final quarter, Rana Waheed Ashraf levelled the scores at 3-3 in the 49th minute, sparking hopes of a famous comeback or at least a penalty shootout.

China extend 52-year Asian Games diving dominance as organisers apologise



Davis Cup Qualifiers 2nd Round Sparks Digital Boom as Road to Bologna Gathers Pace

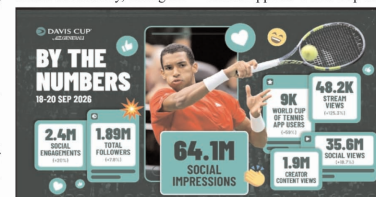
ZAHID YAQOOB KHAWAJA

ISLAMABAD: The Davis Cup by Generali Qualifiers 2nd Round has generated a significant surge in global digital engagement, with millions of tennis fans following the men's World Cup of Tennis across social media, digital platforms and streaming services.

As the competition moves towards the 2026 Final 8 in Bologna, World Tennis has reported substantial increases in video views, social media engagement and usage of the World Cup of Tennis App. The recent round featured 33 ties played across six continents at three different levels of the competition, generating strong engagement across Davis Cup's digital channels. Player-focused stories, behind-the-scenes content, match-day moments and fan experiences helped generate 2.4 million social engagements, representing a 20 per cent increase compared with the corresponding period in 2025. Davis Cup video content recorded 35.6 million views, up 18.7 per cent year-on-year, while 34,800 new followers joined the competition's social media community, taking the United States, Spain, Australia, Canada and Great Britain recording the highest number of visitors. Australia, Argentina, Peru and Brazil also featured among the top 10 countries. World Cup of Tennis App The World Cup of Tennis App also recorded strong growth, with 9,000 active users, an increase of 59 per cent compared with last year. Average engagement time rose by 40.6 per cent to four minutes and 15 seconds per session. More than 11,300 new registrations were recorded across the Davis Cup website.

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England name 16-member ODI squad for Pakistan tour





SCO Member States' Coordinators visit PNCA to explore Pakistan's rich cultural heritage

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: A delegation of coordinators from the member states of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) visited the Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA), as part of the preparatory engagements for the upcoming SCO activities under Pakistan's chairmanship in 2027.

SCO Member States' Coordinators visit PNCA to explore Pakistan's rich cultural heritage. The delegation was warmly received by the Secretary, National Heritage

and Culture Division who welcomed the distinguished guests and briefed them on Pakistan's rich cultural heritage, artistic traditions, and the role of culture in promoting mutual understanding and regional cooperation.

SCO Member States' Coordinators visit PNCA to explore Pakistan's rich cultural heritage. During the visit, the delegation explored PNCA's art galleries, including the photographic exhibition dedicated to the Father of the Nation, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, and the renowned Sadequain



Gallery, which showcases the remarkable artistic legacy of one of Pakistan's most celebrated painters.

SCO Member States'

Coordinators visit PNCA to explore Pakistan's rich cultural heritage.

The visitors also witnessed cultural performances

highlighting the diversity and vibrancy of Pakistan's performing arts.

Director General PNCA, Mr. Muhammad Ayoub Jamali, briefed the delegation on the Council's mandate, its role in the promotion and preservation of Pakistan's visual and performing arts, and its initiatives to foster cultural exchange at national and international levels.

SCO Member States' Coordinators visit PNCA to explore Pakistan's rich cultural heritage.

Recognising the importance of cultural diplomacy

in strengthening ties among SCO member states, the Secretary NHCD also offered PNCA's premises as a platform for participating countries to showcase their respective art, culture, and traditional heritage through cultural stalls and exhibitions during upcoming SCO engagements.

SCO Member States' Coordinators visit PNCA to explore Pakistan's rich cultural heritage. The visit underscored the significance of cultural cooperation as an integral component of regional diplomacy.

Pakistan launches National Mental Health Policy 2026-35

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Thursday launched the National Mental Health Policy 2026-2035, aiming to expand mental health services and support for an estimated 32.4 million people in need of care across the country. The policy was launched during the two-day Global Mental Health Summit being held in Islamabad from October 1-2, bringing together around 800 participants, including mental health experts, policymakers, academics and representatives of national and international development partners.

The initiative was launched under the leadership

of the Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination in partnership with the World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and Global Institute of Human Development (GIHD)-Shifa Tameer-e-Millat University (STMU). According to estimates, around 32.4 million people in Pakistan require mental health care, while only about five percent of the population has access to such services, leaving a treatment gap of around 95 percent.

The shortage of qualified mental health professionals is also a major challenge, with



Pakistan having approximately 0.19 psychiatrists per 100,000 population compared with an average of seven per 100,000 in high-income countries.

Speaking at the summit, Federal Health Minister Syed Mustafa Kamal described

mental health as an emergency and said it was linked to economy. He called for the involvement of all government ministries and individuals in creating a safe and healthy environment and stressed that the summit should lead to concrete

action. Minister of State for Health Dr Malik Mukhtar Ahmad Bharath said the policy represented a shared commitment to bringing mental healthcare closer to families. He said the government would work with provincial authorities to translate the policy into practical measures in schools, primary healthcare facilities and communities. WHO Director-General Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said investment in mental health could generate economic and health benefits, noting that every dollar invested in addressing conditions such as depression and anxiety could yield four dol-

lars in returns through improved health and productivity.

UNICEF Representative in Pakistan Pernille Ironside emphasized the need to place children and adolescents at the centre of mental health efforts, particularly through prevention, early identification and access to care. Director of the Global Institute of Human Development Dr Syed Usman Hamdani said Pakistan was undergoing significant transformation in its mental health agenda through investments in research, policy development, implementation science and community-based approaches.

Opinion & Editorial

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Failed rescue mission

The recovery of the MT Honour 25 from Somali pirates should have brought relief after more than five months of captivity. Instead, it has ended in bereavement for the families of three Pakistani sailors. Of the total 17 hostages, including 10 Pakistanis, five were killed and four wounded before Puntland forces secured the tanker. For those who had waited since April for their loved ones to return home, the vessel's recovery is no substitute for the lives that were lost. The pirates carry responsibility for the killings. What remains unclear, however, is precisely how an operation intended to free the hostages culminated in their deaths. Survivors have said the captors opened fire on the crew when security forces closed in and the pirates began retreating. Puntland authorities have offered a different sequence, saying the five sailors were killed before the operation began. This discrepancy cannot be left unresolved. An authoritative account is now needed of the intelligence available beforehand and the circumstances in which force was authorised. Pakistan, too, has questions to answer since whatever diplomatic activity took place, it did not produce the outcome that mattered most. Islamabad must seek a detailed account from the Somali and Puntland authorities and establish whether Pakistan was informed of the planned operation and what safeguards were contemplated for the hostages.

So things are finally

Refinery upgradation plans

AFTER a full year of criticism that while it had stabilised the economy it had offered no vision for reform, the government is finally moving. A string of recent announcements makes the reform path clearer. Refineries are being asked to upgrade their operations in return for concessions granted in the Brownfield Refinery Upgradation Policy. A number of power distribution companies are being prepared for privatisation, and the ministry has announced the beginning of power wheeling, an important reform stuck in limbo since 2017 and an essential plank in any effort to reform power pricing.

The finance ministry is helping arrange resources for the refineries and the newly privatised PIA, as well as moving along the commitments for the Reko Diq project. A meeting between the finance minister and officials from the US Exim Bank was wrongly interpreted by many as an effort by the government to borrow on behalf of the newly privatised PIA for aircraft procurement. It turned out to be nothing of the sort. Meanwhile, March saw a spectrum auction, setting the stage for the rollout of 5G telecommunications in Pakistan; unlike the last auction in 2021, which saw a lacklustre response, three large telecoms participated and picked up spectrum at a price tag of \$500 million.

So things are finally

beginning to move on the structural front. Obviously, it is too early to call the results, but if the envisioned changes behind these actions bear fruit, reform momentum can certainly start to build. There are a few things to be mindful of, however.

Consider the refinery upgradation plan. In a recent interaction with journalists and industry leaders, the petroleum minister allowed himself to express some annoyance that Pakistan's refineries can only handle "the sweetest grades of crude". This means they are using the most basic technology in their sector. His point was to underline the importance of the upgradation policy, and he emphasised that after the upgrades, Pakistan could also become an exporter of refined products.

If the new rules and policy succeed in getting the refineries to do what they have not done in the past 20 years, that will be a big, positive step.

Fair enough. But of the four refineries that have submitted upgradation plans, only one has the books to bear the cost. That one is Attock Refinery. The other three — National Refinery, Cynergico, and Pakistan Refinery Ltd — will struggle to raise the funds, given their books. Between the four, upgrades worth \$4.2 billion have been announced.

ARL's plan is worth \$600m and comes to around 1.5 times its (real) equity, which makes the plan realistic. For the others, the figures are seven to 25 times their (real) equity, which leaves one wondering about their financing plans.

ARL could potentially put up 30 per cent of its equity share for the project from its own cash holdings, and the remainder would be 2.9 times its EBITDA, which is manageable. It might also need to support NRL's financing since it owns a 25pc stake in the latter. But the other refineries will need support from multilateral lenders or an Exim bank to arrange resources for their plans. This was one reason the finance minister met officials from the US Exim Bank: to help arrange the resources the refineries, PIA, and the Reko Diq project will require. As of now, there is no reason to believe that this will create any public liabilities for the country.

The refineries have been given the option to sign up for a 'Refinery Upgradation Account' ratified by the cabinet in August. The fund has withdrawal rules, including a requirement that projects be completed within five years, with incentives for early completion, penalties for late completion, and sales tax exemption for upgradation equipment. The rules are meant to prevent a repeat of the alleged misuse of the so-called deemed duty in the Musharraf years — when refineries were given an incentive to build stocks and they allegedly took the incentive but did not build any stock.

The case of a global concert

Amna Hashmi

In May last year, I wrote in these pages that the ghost of the Concert of Europe should be neither romanticised nor dismissed. It's harder to ignore sixteen months later.

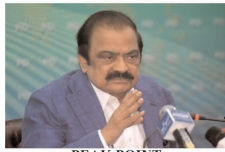
Take a look at the world this week. A war which began in late February with the US-Israel strikes on Iran has expanded to Lebanon and the Strait of Hormuz and drawn in Gulf states. The Houthis and Saudi Arabia have clashed in Yemen, triggering a US security warning over the region recently. In Europe, Russia's war in Ukraine is ongoing, with drones, sabotage and violations of airspace, and senior European officials warning of deliberately ambiguous attacks on NATO territory that are big enough to cause some fear but not enough to trigger the defence clause.

Each fire is handled through ad hoc measures: emergency calls, borrowed mediators, statements after the fact. And they all are connected. British intelligence reportedly believes that the Kremlin may see Washington's focus on Iran as distracting. When things get tough in the Gulf, risks increase in the Baltic, and no one can observe both simultaneously.

It is an old problem. Following the Napoleonic wars, the great powers of Europe convened at the Congress of Vienna in 1815 and resolved disputes without war. The consequence was a Concert of Europe without a constitution, no court, only an informal tradition of consensus diplomacy that for about four decades helped manage disputes among its members. Charles Kupchan's new proposal would restore that practice. Writing in Foreign Policy Magazine, the Global Concert he pitched would meet not occasionally, like the original, but continuously, every day, in a strategically positioned city, with subconferences on flashpoints such as Ukraine and Iran. He questioned the impact of fly-in fly-out summits like the recent G-20 and BRICS one. His concert would also run on goodwill mostly, with no charter and no binding commitments.

Courtesy Tribune

'Off-the-record talks' between PTI and govt ongoing: Rana Sanaullah



PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Adviser to the Prime Minister on Political Affairs Rana Sanaullah said on Thursday that the federal government and PTI were engaged in "off-the-record talks" regarding PTI's planned protest on October 4.

Sanaullah said that the decision on the proposed march rested with PTI's senior leadership, "with whom off-the-record consultation is ongoing".

"So let us see, even if they do not postpone it, we have arrangements in place to stop them," Sanaullah warned.

He likened the PTI's march to a "provincial government attacking the

capital" in an apparent reference to the PTI-led government in KP. "If a political party or a private organisation stages a protest, [...] but for a government to attack [...] it cannot be tolerated under any circumstances," he held. "The law will be enacted in full force, and they (PTI) will be barred from entering Islamabad," he added.

Responding to a question about governor's rule in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sanaullah on Thursday said that the option was "on the table". Sanaullah further clarified that the federal government was in talks with coalition parties about imposing governor's rule in KP. He added that the final decision rested upon the federal government and the Senate, adding that it would only come into effect with parliament's approval. Sanaullah alleged that the KP CM had not been performing his functions as the province's chief executive.

"For the past two months, he has not done anything, nothing about development or counter-terrorism

efforts or for the welfare of people [...] in fact, all he has done is talk about marching to Islamabad and toppling the federal government. "They want to take ladders to Islamabad to secure the release of a certain someone," he added. Sanaullah reiterated that if a province is "engaged in such illegal and unconstitutional activities, then the Centre has the right to declare emergency or governor rule and assume power". The Oct 4 march — which the PTI has announced as part of its nationwide protest to demand the release of its founder, Imran Khan — remains a major bone of contention between the government and the main opposition party, with both taking entrenched positions. Originally scheduled for Sept 27, the march was postponed to Oct 4 last week. On its part, the government has been adamant that it would not allow the party to block roads and disrupt routine life. To back their resolve, authorities had taken extraordinary security measures to ensure that the proposed march never made.

Rana Mashhood honours high achieving Pakistani students in Muscat

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Prime Minister's Youth Programme Rana Mashhood Ahmed Khan on Wednesday attended a High Achievers Awards Ceremony as chief guest at Pakistan School Muscat, where students securing top positions in Cambridge A Levels, O Levels and Federal Board examinations were honoured for their outstanding academic performance, including distinctions of "Top in World" and "Top in Oman". Addressing the ceremony, Rana Mashhood said young people are the foundation of Pakistan's bright future and Pakistani students studying abroad served as ambassadors of the country through their academic achievements, character and capabilities.

He said young people can make a meaningful contribution



to national development by effectively utilising their abilities, adding that academic excellence, leadership, self confidence and practical skills are equally important for building a successful future. Pakistan's Ambassador to Oman Syed Naveed Safdar Bokhari attended the ceremony as guest of honour.

The ceremony recognised students who achieved outstanding results in Cambridge A Levels, O Levels and Federal Board examinations, with special appreciation for those securing "Top in World" and "Top in Oman" distinctions.

Cabinet committee reviews pension reforms for uncovered labour force

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: A meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Pension Reforms for the Uncovered Labour Force was held here on Thursday under the chairmanship of Federal Minister for Law and Justice Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar.

Federal Minister for Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development, Chaudhry Salik Hussain, Minister of State for Finance and Revenue, Bilal Azhar Kayani, Adviser to the Prime Minister, Haroon Akhtar Khan and relevant officials attended the meeting. The meeting reviewed various models for bringing informal and pension-excluded workers into the pension system. A voluntary pension scheme for domestic workers, agricultural workers, self-employed persons and other informal workers was also discussed.

The committee considered options for the participation of employers, employees and self-employed persons, along with digital

registration, transparent record-keeping and long-term financial sustainability of the proposed scheme. The use of Employees Old-Age Benefit Institution's (EOBI) digital system as a model for the proposed voluntary pension scheme was also discussed.

Speaking on the occasion, Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar said every worker should have the right to a dignified and secure retirement, and that pension protection should not remain limited to the formal sector. He said bringing domestic workers, agricultural workers, self-employed persons and other informal workers within the social protection framework was an important need.

The Federal Minister said the proposed pension system would be designed to be accessible, financially sustainable and long-term, while remaining aligned with international standards and International Labour Organization (ILO) principles.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Law & Justice Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar presides over a meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Pension Reforms for Uncovered Segments of the Labour Force, with Federal Minister Chaudhry Salik Hussain, Adviser to the Prime Minister Haroon Akhtar Khan and senior officials in attendance.

Gilani congratulates Morocco's first female PM Fatima Zahra El Mansouri

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani Thursday extended his heartfelt congratulations to Fatima Zahra El Mansouri on her appointment as Morocco's first female Prime Minister and conveyed his best wishes for her success in office. In his message of felicitation, the Chairman Senate described her appointment as a significant milestone in Morocco's political history and an important recognition of women's role in political leadership and public service. He expressed confidence that, with her experience and leadership, she would make a meaningful contribution to Morocco's continued development, prosperity and public welfare. Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani recalled that Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto was the first woman Prime Minister of Pakistan and of the Muslim world, and had made an enduring contribution to democracy and public service.

Kamal urges coordinated response to mental health issues

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Health Syed Mustafa Kamal has called for urgent and coordinated action to address Pakistan's growing mental health issues.

Addressing the Global Mental Health Summit 2026, the minister said the situation had become highly concerning and required immediate attention and a comprehensive national response.

"Mental health is not only a matter for the Ministry of Health. All ministries have to play their role in addressing this challenge," he said.

Mustafa Kamal stressed that efforts to promote mental health were required at every level, from counsellors and healthcare professionals to policymakers, with



greater emphasis on awareness, prevention and access to support.

He said the country needed to focus on creating safe, healthy and liveable environments, adding that ensuring such conditions was a shared responsibility of government institutions and society.

The minister said addressing mental health challenges required a broader approach that went beyond treatment and included prevention, early support and greater public awareness.

M. Phil Zoology viva voce successfully conducted at Women University Mardan

PEAK POINT

MARDAN: Women University Mardan (WUM) successfully conducted the M.Phil Zoology Viva Voce examinations, in which 12 M.Phil scholars successfully presented and defended their research work. The scholars included two under the supervision of Dr. Huma Fatima, six under Dr. Nosheen Rashid, two under Dr. Hina Jabben, and two under Dr. Touseef Rehman. The research theses were examined by distinguished external examiners, Dr. Sumbal Haleem, Dr. Erum Maqsood, and Dr. Asma Azam from SBBWU, Peshawar, and Dr. Gulab Fatima Rani from KMU, Peshawar. The University appre-



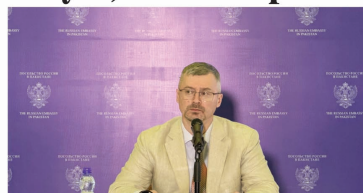
ciated the examiners for their valuable time, scholarly insights, and constructive feedback. The research projects demonstrated strong practical relevance and potential applications across poultry health, veterinary sciences, livestock management, biodiversity conservation, ecological planning, pest management, sustainable agriculture, and animal-feed industries.

Russian envoy accuses Kyiv, West of prolonging Ukraine conflict

RAJA MOHSIN

ISLAMABAD: Russian Ambassador to Pakistan Albert Khorev on Thursday accused Kyiv and its Western supporters of prolonging the Ukraine conflict, alleging that Moscow was facing a "full-scale hybrid war" involving military, economic, legal and information dimensions. Addressing a briefing in Islamabad on the situation in Ukraine, Ambassador Khorev said 54 countries were providing military and financial support to Ukraine, including the United States, Canada, European Union countries, Japan, South Korea, Australia and New

Zealand. He claimed that Western military assistance to Ukraine exceeded \$160 billion between 2022 and 2025, while NATO countries were providing intelligence and communications support and assisting in the planning and use of military operations. The ambassador also alleged that Ukrainian attacks had caused damage to Russian infrastructure and resulted in civilian casualties. These figures and allegations were presented by the Russian side and were not independently verified at the briefing. On sanctions, Mr Khorev said Western restrictions had failed to achieve their intended objective of



undermining Russia's economy. He claimed that the sanctions had also adversely affected European and developing economies by disrupting logistics, energy supplies, financial access and technology. He said the restrictions were accelerating the development of alternative finan-

cial and trading mechanisms within BRICS, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and ASEAN, including greater use of national currencies. The Russian envoy also criticised Western measures against what he described as Russia's "shadow fleet", arguing that the

term was not contained in the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea. He alleged that more than 200 civilian vessels had been targeted by Ukrainian shelling in the Black Sea and Sea of Azov in 2026, including 96 vessels flying foreign flags. He said 12 vessels were targeted in 2025 and one each in 2024 and 2023. Khorev maintained that Russia's actions in the region were defensive and aimed at eliminating threats to international maritime navigation. On the legal front, he criticised international mechanisms established in connection with alleged damage caused to Ukraine, including the Register of

Damage for Ukraine and the proposed International Claims Commission for Ukraine. Referring to a June 15 decision of the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague, he said a five-member tribunal had rejected several Ukrainian claims concerning the Kerch Strait, the Sea of Azov and maritime areas around Crimea. The ambassador also rejected what he described as "disinformation" concerning Ukrainian children allegedly taken to Russia. He referred to a list of 339 children provided by Ukraine during bilateral talks in Istanbul in June 2025, claiming that checks had shown.