



KP government has no writ in 12 districts: Dr. Tariq Fazal



Ahsan pushes district-level reforms for human capital development



Finance Minister pushes major reforms in Pakistan Power Sector

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CDF Munir reaffirms Pakistan's commitment to international peace in meeting with UN chief

PEAK POINT

RAWALPINDI: Chief of Army Staff and Chief of Defence Forces Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir on Wednesday reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to international peace in a meeting with United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres, the military's media affairs wing said.

The UN secretary general is currently in Islamabad on a two-day official visit.

In a statement on Wednesday, Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said Guterres called on CDF Munir at the General Headquarters (GHQ) in Rawalpindi.

"During the meeting, matters of mutual interest, the prevailing regional security environment and the UN's role in promoting

international peace and security were discussed," it said. "The two sides exchanged views on regional stability, the Jammu and Kashmir dispute, India's abeyance of the Indus Waters Treaty and terrorism emanating from Afghanistan," it added.

During the meeting, CDF Munir also reaffirmed "Pakistan's commitment to international peace and highlighted its contributions to UN peacekeeping missions". He also lauded the UN's role in "advancing peace, stability and humanitarian cooperation".

According to ISPR, the UN secretary general paid tribute to the sacrifices and contributions of Pakistan and its armed forces in the war against terror and in UN peacekeeping missions.



Chief of Defence Forces and Chief of Army Staff Field Marshal Asim Munir (R) and United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres (L) during a meeting in Rawalpindi.

Pakistani troops already in Saudi Arabia across multiple domains: DG ISPR

PEAK POINT



ISLAMABAD: Pakistani troops are already present in Saudi Arabia across multiple capabilities and domains, Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) Director-General (DG)

Lt Gen Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry said on Wednesday.

Asked by CNN whether Pakistani troops or personnel were already on the ground in Saudi Arabia as part of the Makkah alliance, the DG ISPR said the forces had been there for decades. "Pakistani troops have been there for decades [...] in Saudi Arabia," Lt Gen Chaudhry said.

He said the Makkah alliance had not emerged "in a vacuum", pointing to the longstanding diplomatic, political, military and people-to-people ties between Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Türkiye. "So I can share with you that Pakistani troops, in multiple capabilities and domains, are already there," the DG ISPR said. The remarks come after Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Türkiye agreed to immediately implement their collective defence commitments and ensure the "rapid deployment" of agreed military forces and capabilities in Saudi Arabia.

US Vice President Vance says Iran must cut enrichment to end war

MAHPARA ZAMAN



NEW YORK: US Vice President JD Vance has said in an exclusive interview with Reuters that Iran must make a meaningful reduction in its nuclear enrichment capacity to satisfy US demands and end the country's seven-month war, even as Washington was unsure how Tehran makes decisions in negotiations.

Vance, a longtime sceptic of US involvement in foreign wars, has taken a leading role in negotiating a settlement to the conflict and brokered a provisional peace agreement in June that quickly fell apart.

The war has jolted global energy markets and become a political liability for President Donald Trump and fellow Republicans ahead of November midterm elections. Speaking on Monday after a campaign trip in Alaska, Vance said any agreement would require Iran to reduce its nuclear enrichment capacity, rather than offer assurances of future nuclear drawdowns.

"If you don't want a nuclear weapon, then why do you need 60 per cent enriched fuel? And if you want to show commitment to not building a nuclear weapon, don't build highly enriched fuel. That's a very basic threshold issue," Vance said. "I think if they want to show a commitment to not building a nuclear weapon, they would do something meaningful on their enrichment capacity." Iran and the US have exchanged proposals in recent weeks aimed at ending the war and reopening the Strait of Hormuz, a vital global energy shipping route. Trump rejected Tehran's latest offer and has warned that military operations could intensify after the midterms.

18 terrorists killed in separate engagements in KP, Balochistan

PEAK POINT



RAWALPINDI: Security forces eliminated 18 terrorists in separate engagements in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, state media reported on

Wednesday, citing security sources.

In KP, Pakistan TV reported that security forces "killed 13 Fitna al-Khawarij terrorists in an intelligence-based operation in North Waziristan, as operations against militant groups continue under the Azm-e-Istehkam vision". Separately, in Balochistan's Mastung district, security forces killed five terrorists belonging to Fitna al-Hindustan, Pakistan TV reported. It added that security forces recovered heavy weapons and ammunition from the slain terrorists, and clearance and search operations were underway under Operation Radd-ul-Fitna 3. Fitna al-Khawarij is a term the state uses for terrorists belonging to the banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan, while the state has designated Balochistan-based terrorist groups as Fitna-al-Hindustan to highlight India's alleged role in terrorism and destabilisation across Pakistan.

Seven policeman injured in attack on police check post in Kohat

PEAK POINT

PESHAWAR: Seven police personnel were injured when unidentified terrorists attacked a police check post in the Shadipur area of Kohat district, police said on Wednesday. According to District Police Officer (DPO) Mazhar Iqbal, police successfully foiled the attack on the Shadipur check post. The attackers opened fire on the post, prompting police to retaliate, after which the terrorists fled the scene. The injured policemen were shifted to a hospital for medical treatment. Police cordoned off the area and launched a search operation to trace the fleeing attackers.

PM Shehbaz directs acceleration of ML-1 Project upgrade, corporate-style reforms in railways

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday directed authorities to accelerate work on the Main Line-1 (ML-1) railway upgrade and introduce corporate-style reforms in Pakistan Railways.

The ML-1 project aims to upgrade and modernise key infrastructure to enhance freight and passenger connectivity from Karachi to Peshawar. Presiding over a meeting on Pakistan Railways on Wednesday, the prime minister appreciated the efforts of teams from the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) and the Ministry of Railways, led by the NAB chairman, to identify and recover encroached railway land, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said.

"Modernising ML-1 is of key importance for the development of Pakistan Railways, improving passenger services and increasing freight transport," he was quoted as saying. The prime minister directed that ML-1 be developed on a commercial basis by utilising identified railway land worth billions of rupees.



"The real commercial potential of railway properties needs to be harnessed," he said, calling

for the effective use of valuable railway land for

commercial purposes to contribute to the national economy and the development of Pakistan Railways. He said corporate-style reforms to strengthen the railways and make it economically self-sufficient were among the government's priorities. He added that the railway minister was working to make the organisation profitable and improve its opera-

tions. PM Shehbaz, during the meeting, approved securing bank financing through commercial projects on railway land and utilising the funds for the project.

He directed authorities to present a comprehensive plan within two weeks based on the actual commercial potential of railway land.

The meeting was informed that the 1,726-kilometre ML-1 upgrade had been divided into four major sections: Karachi-Rohri, Rohri-Multan, Multan-Lahore and Lahore-Peshawar.

International financing was being used for the Karachi-Rohri section, while plans were being prepared to finance the remaining sections through domestic resources, the meeting was told.

Pakistan urges action on climate finance, respect for water treaties at UN



PEAK POINT

UNITED NATIONS: Pakistan has called for urgent action on climate finance, reform of the international debt system and greater cooperation over shared water resources in the UN General Assembly's (UNGA) Second Committee following the high-level political debate of the 81st session. Speaking in the general debate of the Second Committee on Tuesday, Pakistan's Deputy Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Ambassador Usman Jadoon, said the committee must focus on delivering tangible results on some of the world's most pressing economic and development challenges. The Second Committee deals with economic and financial matters, including development, financing, international trade, debt, climate change.



SPORTS



Ushna, Mahin make history with Pakistan's first World Tennis Futures doubles win



PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's leading women tennis players Ushna Suhail and Mahin Aftab Qureshi on Wednesday created history by becoming the first Pakistani pair to win a doubles match at a World Tennis Women's Futures tournament. Competing in the W15 Islamabad-World Tennis Women's Futures Championships 2026 at the PTF Tennis Complex, Islamabad, Ushna and Mahin defeated compatriot Romisa Malik and South Africa's Nissa Finnigan 6-0, 6-0 in the opening round of the doubles event. The victory enabled the Pakistani duo to advance to the second round and earn valuable WTA ranking points, marking a significant milestone for women's tennis in the country.

Pakistan Tennis Federation (PTF) President Aisam-ul-Haq Qureshi, Secretary General Col. Zia-ud-Din Tufail (Retd) and the PTF management congratulated Ushna and Mahin on their historic achievement. They expressed the hope that the pair's performance would inspire a new generation of female tennis players in Pakistan.

The first leg of the W15 Islamabad Championships is being sponsored by Fatima Group and features 30 players from 17 countries, including France, China, Russia, Denmark, Mexico, Uzbekistan, South Africa, the Netherlands, Korea, Nepal, Japan,

Hong Kong, Germany, Thailand, Türkiye, the Czech Republic and Pakistan. France's Astrid Ciotte, ranked 624th in the world, is the top seed in the tournament.

Besides Ushna and Mahin, Pakistan's other representatives include Meheq Khokhar, Romisa Malik and Hajra Sohail. In the women's singles first round, Wozuko Mdlulwa of South Africa defeated Mahin Aftab Qureshi 4-6, 7-6(7), 7-5, while Nepal's Abhilasha Bista beat Romisa Malik 6-0, 6-1.

Russia's Sofia Suslova defeated compatriot Liliya Piskun 0-6, 6-3, 6-1, while Denmark's Elena Jamshidi blanked Pakistan's Meheq Khokhar 6-0, 6-0.

Uzbekistan's Sevil Yuldasheva defeated Russia's Anna Simkina 6-0, 6-0, Germany's Anastasiya Kuparev overcame Pakistan's Hajra Sohail 6-4, 6-1, and Japan's Suzuna Oigawa beat Korea's Jeong Moon 6-2, 6-2. In the other women's doubles first-round matches, South Africa's Warona Mdlulwa and Wozuko Mdlulwa defeated Russia's Sofia Suslova and Liliya Piskun 6-3, 6-2. Japan's Suzuna Oigawa and Hong Kong's Kei Yau Cheung beat Uzbekistan's Sabirina Olimjanova and Russia's Varvara Rubtsova 6-2, 6-2, while Russia's Julia Khramtsova and Ksenia Laskutova defeated Türkiye's Serife Pelin Sari and Nepal's Abhilasha Bista 6-1, 6-1.

Wasim Akram names Diljit Dosanjh his favourite, hails his global stardom



MOHSIN ALI

ISLAMABAD: Former Pakistan cricket captain Wasim Akram has revealed his admiration for Indian music sensation Diljit Dosanjh, naming the global Punjabi star as his favourite Punjabi singer and showering praise on his music and international success. A viral video circulating on social media captured Wasim during a casual interaction when he was asked about his favourite Punjabi singer. Without hesitation, the cricketing legend picked Diljit, giving the Indian singer a warm shoutout that quickly caught the attention of both sports and music enthusiasts across the subcontinent. Speaking about Diljit's work, Wasim described his music as "amazing" and hailed him as "one of the biggest stars in the world." The former cricketer also expressed his belief that the singer deserves the remarkable success and recognition he is currently enjoying on the international stage. Wasim's candid praise has sparked a wave of positive reactions online, with social media users appreciating the cross-border admiration between two celebrated figures from Pakistan and India. The moment also highlighted the enduring ability of music to transcend geographical and political boundaries, with fans from both sides of the border celebrating Wasim's appreciation for Diljit's artistry.

Abrar Ahmed loses top position, Hasan, Saim rise in new T20I rankings



PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's Hasan Nawaz and Saim Ayub have climbed the latest ICC T20I rankings, while spinner Abrar Ahmed has slipped from the top spot after the Asian Games 2026 campaign and the opening T20I between India and the West Indies.

In the T20I batting

rankings, newly appointed Pakistan captain Hasan Nawaz has slipped four places to 45th with 544 points. Farhan has retained third place with 818 points, while India's Ishan Kishan and Abhishek Sharma remained at the top two positions respectively.

Saim Ayub has moved up one place to 38th with 566 points, while former Pakistan captain Babar Azam

seven sixes.

Meanwhile, left-handed batter Fakhar Zaman has fallen 10 places to 82nd with 471 points.

In the T20I bowling rankings, Abrar has lost his position at the top, dropping to second place with 718 points. Afghanistan's Rashid Khan has reclaimed the number one spot, while Australia's Adam Zampa remains third.

Mohammad Nawaz has slipped four places from eighth to 12th with 645 points, while Salman Mirza has dropped seven places to 23rd with 623 points.

Shaheen Afridi has also fallen three places to 36th with 590 points.

Former Spain, Barca winger Pedro retires from football



Djokovic overcomes Zverev in Beijing thriller



President's Trophy Grade-II Gold: Eshaal Associates, National Bank play out draw

BY SHAKEEL UR REHMAN

KARACHI: Eshaal Associates and National Bank played out a draw in their President's Trophy Grade-II Gold match at the state bank Sports Complex in Karachi, with both sides settling for a point after an absorbing contest. Eshaal Associates finished on 19 points in Group B, while Kingsmen Sports get 24 points and top the table. Both teams qualify for the semi-finals. Resuming their second innings at 148 for three, Eshaal Associates declared at 415 for eight, setting National Bank a target of 344 runs after they had been bowled out for 227 in the first innings. Young Pakistan Under-19 opener Usman Khan, who had earlier struck a magnificent double century against JDW Sugar Mills, once again produced an outstanding batting performance. Showing remarkable patience and temperament, Usman

scored 171 runs from 219 deliveries, hitting eight fours and six towering sixes. Usman was involved in a crucial 156-run third-wicket partnership with Ashir Mahmood, which provided the foundation for Eshaal Associates to build a

Associates holding a substantial first-innings advantage, National Bank made a determined effort in their second innings. They reached 196 for three at the close of play on the final day, forcing the match to end in a draw. Naem added 69



commanding total. Ashir Mahmood also continued his excellent form, scoring a superb 102 runs, including seven fours and eight sixes. For National Bank, Muhammad Naem was the standout performer with the bat. He scored an impressive 102 runs, striking 10 fours and five sixes in the first innings. With Eshaal

runs in the second innings, while Abdul Wahid remained unbeaten on 55, ensuring that National Bank avoided defeat. Eshaal Associates' bowlers had earlier kept National Bank under pressure, with Muhammad Sudais claiming five wickets for 53 runs, while Muhammad Faizan took four wickets.

**2,200 Journalists apply for housing as only 237 Plots enter allocation**

75,000 people benefiting from Apna Ghar Housing Scheme, Senate Told

NADEEM TANOLI

ISLAMABAD: In the last two months, the government issued between 8,000 and 10,000 notices to officials for unpaid rent on government houses. The Ministry of Housing plans to deduct outstanding amounts directly from defaulters' bank accounts under applicable rules. The Senate Standing Committee on Housing and Works was told that there are around 37,000 government houses across Pakistan. The Ministry said it was moving toward a digital system to improve rent collection and ensure that officials pay their dues on time. The move came as the committee reviewed several long standing housing issues, including recovery of unpaid rent, stalled housing projects, the KS Developers joint venture and housing opportunities for journalists and media work-

ers. Secretary Housing told the committee that efforts were under way to recover outstanding rents from government employees and strengthen the payment system. He said some officials had large amounts of unpaid rent, prompting the ministry to issue thousands of notices during the last two months. Under the planned digital system, outstanding rent would be deducted directly from the accounts of concerned officials according to the relevant rules. The committee also reviewed the KS Developers joint venture, where Rs2.9 billion had been deposited into the government account. Officials told the committee that the joint venture was cancelled in 2021. The Secretary Housing said around 2,500 of the 8,000 applicants had already received their deposited money. Arrangements were being considered for the

remaining applicants. Officials further said applicants who had not withdrawn their money could be considered for a 10 percent quota in a future housing scheme. The ministry said priority was being given to completing housing schemes that had already been launched and resolving pending cases of affected applicants. The committee also reviewed delays in housing projects being carried out by the Federal Government Employees Housing Authority and the Pakistan Housing Authority. The Secretary Housing said the Prime Minister had launched the Apna Ghar scheme for people from different sections of society and that around 75,000 people were benefiting from the programme. He said different housing projects had different completion periods and that efforts were being made to complete them within the

approved timelines. The housing quota for journalists and media workers was another major issue before the committee. Senator Jan Muhammad said the traditional 2 percent quota for journalists should be restored in housing schemes and stressed that media workers should receive proper representation. The Secretary Housing told the committee that the file concerning restoration of the journalists quota had recently reached the ministry and was being processed. He said residential plots were available with the Ministry of Housing and efforts would be made to facilitate eligible journalists and media workers. He added that restoring the quota to 2 percent would require completion of the required official process. National Press Club President Abdul Razzaq Sial told the committee that around 2,200

applications had been received from journalists and media workers, while 237 plots were currently being allocated. He said increasing the quota would allow more eligible journalists and media workers to receive housing opportunities. He also informed the committee that a scrutiny and verification system had been developed in coordination with the Ministry of Information to check applications and ensure that eligible applicants were considered through an organised process. The committee was also informed about the case of 37 journalists in G14 that has remained under consideration since 2004. Chairman Senator Nasir Butt directed that the matter be taken up with the relevant forum and assured the journalists that appropriate recommendations would be forwarded. National Press Club

Secretary General Furqan Rao also requested that employees of AAP be considered for inclusion in the journalists quota according to the applicable eligibility criteria. The committee noted the request for consideration under the relevant policy. Senator Nasir Butt assured the journalists that he would forward the committee recommendation for restoration of the 2 percent quota. He stressed that eligible members of the media community should receive fair opportunities in government housing schemes. The committee also stressed the need to complete stalled housing projects, recover outstanding government rents, resolve problems faced by affected applicants and improve housing opportunities for eligible journalists and media workers.

"Dushanbe Vibes in Islamabad: Tajikistan's cultural colours illuminate capital"

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: For one enchanting evening, the vibrant heart of Dushanbe seemed to beat in Islamabad as the melodies, rhythms and colours of Tajikistan filled the air, bringing the warmth of Central Asian culture to the twin cities. The occasion was a special cultural evening organized by the Embassy of the Republic of

Tajikistan and the Centaurus Mall and as part of celebrations marking the 35th Independence Day of Tajikistan. A large audience from Islamabad and Rawalpindi gathered to experience an evening that beautifully blended music, dance, tradition and the enduring bonds of friendship between Pakistan and Tajikistan. The visiting cultural troupe from Tajikistan presented



a captivating programme showcasing different dimensions of the country's rich artistic heritage. Traditional music, graceful folk dances, national songs and colourful artistic performances transformed the venue into a lively cultural space reminiscent of the famous evening gatherings of Dushanbe. Dressed in vibrant traditional attire, the performers won repeated applause

from the audience with their energetic movements, melodious voices and graceful choreography. Each performance offered a glimpse into Tajikistan's centuries-old traditions and its distinctive cultural identity, while also reminding the audience of the deep historical and people-to-people connections linking Pakistan with the Central Asian republic.

Opinion & Editorial

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Time to retire quotas

The debate over Sindh's urban-rural quota system has been rekindled by the recent MDCAT results, in which rural candidates performed impressively and exceeded their urban counterparts on several measures. For four decades, the 60-40 rural-urban split in government jobs and educational institutions has been a cornerstone of affirmative action, designed to bridge the divide between Sindh's developed and underdeveloped regions. However, the policy now faces a fresh challenge from an unlikely coalition, as a growing number of educated Sindh professionals are joining the chorus of Urdu-speaking critics to scrap the quota regime. Though outstanding rural performers pop up from time to time, the raw number of top performers this year is being used to argue for ending quotas. Students from some of Sindh's most underdeveloped districts, including Tharparkar, outperformed candidates from Karachi, Hyderabad and Sukkur. This empirical evidence directly challenges the quota system's foundational premise - that rural deprivation requires special protections. At the same time, some experts have noted that rural students' improved performance has occurred despite the rural-urban resource gap not narrowing significantly - students are doing better despite the quota, not because of it.

Unlearned lessons

Zahid Hussain

THE talks between the government and the opposition were doomed from the outset, even though the fact that the two sides sat face to face at the negotiating table was a positive sign. The meeting took place under the shadow of the PTI's threatened long march to Islamabad, while the government brandished the option of governor's rule in KP. The tension was palpable. The capital was sealed off with containers and the highways were blocked. Days before the talks, the military leadership warned against any repeat of a May 9-like situation - a clear message to the opposition not to cross the red line. Some opposition leaders, for their part, wanted a negotiated deal to temperature. The prolonged discussions suggested a measure of seriousness on both sides, but mutual distrust and brinkmanship blocked any breakthrough. The two sides gave contrary accounts of why the talks collapsed after a marathon sitting. The government contended that the opposition backed out after agreeing to a final draft; the other side denied this, saying the differences were too wide to bridge. That so-called final draft is not in the public domain, but two major points of difference appear to have defeated the agreement. The PTI insisted on a meeting with Imran Khan, while the government wanted the KP provincial govern-

ment to give unqualified support to the counterterrorism operation being carried out by the security forces.

While conceding to the opposition's demand that the former prime minister be allowed to meet his family and his lawyers, as ordered by the Islamabad High Court, and agreeing to implement the Supreme Court order to arrange his medical treatment, the government was not prepared to let PTI leaders meet and consult him before finalising the agreement - a condition it found unacceptable.

The prevailing political instability has provided greater space to the militants. The real cause of the stalemate, however, was the issue of provincial government support, and taking ownership of a planned counterterrorism military operation in five southern districts, including the merged Fata regions. For the provincial government this was an extremely tricky matter; it had strongly opposed any kinetic operation involving the displacement of the population, and the bitter memories of earlier operations had created intense public opposition to any such action.

A multiparty meeting called by the provincial government early this year - whose participants included provincial legislators belonging to PML-N, PPP and ANP - had unanimously opposed any large-scale military operation. Considering this, it was hard for the PTI to take ownership of a highly unpopular

action.

It may be true that the PTI has no clarity over how to combat the menace of terrorism that has swept a large part of the province. Its inaction, often seen as capitulation, has added to the problem. The ill-equipped police and Counter Terrorism Department have been a major target of militants, resulting in a virtual collapse of the administration in the troubled districts. That inaction could also be attributed to the ongoing confrontation between the PTI and the establishment-backed federal government.

Then there is the question of whether we have a coherent, overarching national security policy and counterterrorism strategy to deal with this existential threat. There has rarely been any debate in parliament on internal security policy. It is all left to the security establishment, with hardly any policy input from the civilian leadership.

KP has witnessed a strong resurgence of militancy over the last five years, which has claimed the lives of thousands of civilians and security personnel. Last year saw the highest number of terrorist attacks in the province since 2013, despite claims of successful intelligence operations that killed hundreds of terrorists. The prevailing political instability has provided greater space to the militants, who are now better equipped and better organised, and who have extended their activities to other parts of the province.

Courtesy Dawn

In search of volunteers

Mirza Mujtaba Baig

Walk into any climate conference in Karachi and you will meet founders.

Each leads an NGO with a name, a logo and a social media page. What is harder to find is the crowd behind them. Over the years I have come to suspect that many of our environmental groups are not movements but individuals, and that their apparent size has more to do with the last grant than with any lasting community support.

An NGO is known almost entirely by its founder's face. Then funding arrives, and suddenly there are coordinators, project officers, consultants and a team photograph. The workforce looks impressive, but it was assembled by a budget line. When the project closes, the team thins out, and the founder is once again the outfit. This is the difference between a body with a volunteer base and one with a payroll. Volunteers stay when there is no money. Employees, quite reasonably, do not.

Language has become part of the problem. People recruited for an event, handed a T-shirt and paid a daily wage or an incentive are often described in reports as volunteers. They are not. Someone who performs an assigned task for payment is an event worker, and there is nothing shameful in that; honest work deserves honest pay. The problem lies in the label, which borrows the moral credit of volunteerism while hiding the transaction.

Why is real volunteering so thin in Pakistan? Part of the answer is structural. Political parties offer workers something that civil society rarely can: access, networks, visibility and standing, especially for those near a governing party. A phone call from the right office can open doors that years of unpaid NGO work will not. This is an observation about incentives, not about any party.

Yet the fault is not only outside. Inside some established NGOs, the staff control the projects, the budgets and the access, and a newcomer finds little room.

Courtesy Tribune

National Disaster preparedness and Response Capacity Needs Further Strengthening, Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq



PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, in his message on the 21st anniversary of the devastating earthquake of October 8, 2005, said that the tragedy of the earthquake that struck 21 years ago remains fresh in the hearts of the entire nation. He said that the loss of a large number of precious human lives and widespread destruction in Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and other affected areas is an unforgettable national tragedy. He also expressed solidarity with the affected families and shared their grief

over the loss and hardships they endured. Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq said that the unity, compassion and collective sense of responsibility demonstrated by the Pakistani nation in the aftermath of the October 8, 2005 tragedy constituted a proud chapter in the country's history. He said that people from across the country, relief organisations, volunteers, the armed forces and civil society came forward and actively participated in relief operations. He particularly appreciated the role of the armed forces, saying that personnel of the Pakistan Army played an active role in rescue and relief operations and provided every possible assistance to the people in the affected areas. He said that the collective efforts and unwavering commitment demonstrated during the reconstruction and rehabilitation process played a significant role in restoring normal life in the affected areas. Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq said that the experience of the 2005 earthquake under-

scored the importance of enhanced preparedness for natural disasters and effective coordination among relevant institutions. He said that early warning systems, local-level emergency response arrangements, rescue and relief capabilities, and public awareness needed to be further strengthened to minimise the loss of life and property caused by natural disasters. He prayed that Allah Almighty grant mercy and eternal peace to all those who lost their lives in the October 8 tragedy and give their bereaved families the strength and patience to bear the loss. Deputy Speaker National Assembly Syed Ghulam Mustafa Shah said that the October 8, 2005 tragedy serves as a reminder of the importance of human compassion, mutual cooperation and national unity. He said that effective coordination and collective efforts among the government, relevant institutions, experts and the public were essential to reducing the impact of natural disasters.

Ahsan pushes district-level reforms for human capital development

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal on Wednesday called for treating education, health, nutrition, clean water and population balance as a "national emergency", stressing greater devolution of authority to districts to ensure delivery of basic services at citizens' doorsteps.

He chaired the first meeting of the Human Capital and Skills Mission, the seventh of the 11 National Economic Missions under URAAN Pakistan, which reviewed Pakistan's standing in health, education, and skills against peer countries, mission targets, and a proposed federal-provincial delivery mechanism.

"Where will Pakistan stand in 2047, when we complete one hundred years of independence? That is the decisive question before us today. Just as we won Marka-e-Haq, we must now win Marka-e-Taraqqi - the battle for development," he said.

The minister said Pakistan had prepared

development plans many times, but political instability had repeatedly disrupted policy continuity. He stressed that continuity of policies and political stability were indispensable for putting the country on the path of development.

"Investment in human resources and skills is the foundation of Pakistan's future development," he said.

Ahsan Iqbal said social-sector challenges were more important than roads and buildings and must be addressed as a national emergency. "Pakistan's literacy rate is 63 percent. With literacy at this level, we cannot develop at the speed we need," he said, adding that rapid population growth of 2.55 percent was a major challenge that could undermine economic progress. The meeting was informed that Pakistan ranked 168th among 193 countries on the Human Development Index, while its Human Capital Index score of 0.41 meant a child born today would attain only 41 percent of productive potential. Stunting stood at 40.2 percent, while maternal mortality was 186 per 100,000 live births.

In a statement, Gilani said the test reflected Pakistan's growing scientific and technological capabilities. He described it as an important step towards greater self-reliance in defence technology. The chairman praised the scientists, engineers and technical experts involved in developing the system, which is equipped with modern avionics and navigation technology. He said the achievement demonstrated the expertise of Pakistan's armed forces and scientific community. Gilani expressed confidence that Pakistani scientists and engineers would continue to contribute to advanced technology, national security and development.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning Development and Special Initiatives Ahsan Iqbal chairs a meeting of the Human Capital and Skills Mission, the seventh of the 11 National Economic Missions under URAAN Pakistan.

Finance Minister pushes major reforms in Pakistan Power Sector

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb called for reforms in Pakistan's power sector to improve efficiency, attract private investment and make the electricity system financially stronger while protecting consumers. He chaired the second meeting of the Steering Committee on Power Sector Regulatory Regime at the Finance Division, where the committee reviewed progress on power sector reforms and discussed major changes taking place in the industry, including the rapid use of solar power and changing patterns

of electricity demand. Senator Aurangzeb said the changing power sector required a regulatory system that could keep pace with new technology while supporting investment, competition, better services and consumer interests. The committee reviewed several major challenges facing the power sector, including existing capacity obligations, changes in electricity demand on the national grid, service quality and limits on new investment. Members also discussed the need for stronger incentives for efficiency and a better system for providing government subsidies. The Finance Minister stressed the need for a market structure

that gives power companies clearer incentives to improve efficiency and service quality. The committee discussed increasing competition and private sector participation as part of the reform process. One proposal discussed by the committee was greater separation between the electricity network and supply businesses. Under the proposed approach, distribution network operators would mainly focus on running and maintaining the electricity network, while competitive supply companies would operate under a suitable regulatory system. The committee also discussed the need for a predictable and transparent regu-

latory framework. This would include clearer rules for sharing risks, improved licensing arrangements and tariff methods that can support investment while also protecting consumers from unnecessary costs. Senator Aurangzeb said reforms should improve the financial position of the power sector, reduce waste and inefficiencies and create better conditions for long term private investment. The meeting also examined new opportunities created by changes in the electricity market, especially the growing use of battery energy storage systems and other technologies. The committee discussed whether distribution companies could

take up suitable additional infrastructure and related commercial activities through separate entities or special purpose vehicles. The purpose of such activities would be to make better use of existing public assets, create additional income and ultimately provide benefits to consumers. However, the Finance Minister stressed that such commercial activities must operate under clear rules, with proper safeguards and transparency. He said any financial benefits generated through public infrastructure should be shared appropriately with consumers and should not simply become an additional source of revenue without proper

oversight. The committee also discussed ways to make government support and subsidies more targeted and effective. Members stressed that reforms should remain focused on financial sustainability, better electricity services and affordable power for consumers. The Finance Minister said the future regulatory system must be flexible enough to deal with new developments such as distributed electricity generation, battery storage and electric vehicles. At the same time, the system must maintain reliable electricity supplies, encourage efficient investment and create more opportunities for private companies.

Interior Minister, Polish Minister discuss security cooperation, intelligence sharing, legal migration

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi and Minister of State for Interior Talal Chaudhry met Poland's Minister and Head of the Council of Ministers, Tomasz Siemoniak, to discuss bilateral relations and ways to enhance security cooperation between Pakistan and Poland. The meeting focused on strengthening cooperation in security, intelligence sharing, counter terrorism, tackling illegal migration, and collaboration between law enforcement agencies. Both sides agreed on the need to give new momentum to bilateral cooperation and increase high-level contacts between the two countries.

The two countries also agreed to finalize various memorandums of understanding, including Mutual Legal Assistance arrangements, at the earliest opportunity. It was further agreed that a delegation from



Pakistan's Ministry of Interior, led by Minister of State Talal Chaudhry, will soon visit Poland to further strengthen bilateral relations. Speaking on the occasion, Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi said that the Government of Pakistan has adopted a zero-tolerance policy against narcotics, illegal migration, and organized crime. He stated that government measures have resulted in a 64 percent reduction in illegal migration from Pakistan to Europe. Mohsin Naqvi said that greater bilateral cooperation and coordination could significantly reduce these crimes.

KP government has no writ in 12 districts: Dr. Tariq Fazal

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Parliamentary Affairs, Dr Tariq Fazal Chaudhry on Wednesday said the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government had almost no writ in 12 districts of the province, including eight former tribal districts.

Talking to reporters at the Parliament House, he said the KP government needed to understand the seriousness of the situation and cooperate with security agencies in the fight against terrorism.

"If they first commit themselves to cooperating with the security agencies and then ensure its implementation, the federal government will fully support them and move forward," he said. However, he said the situation



would require a different approach if the provincial government did not commit itself to cooperation, either verbally or practically.

He said the KP government should support the federal government in the fight against terrorism and seek greater federal assistance and resources to deal with the security situation.

"The situation is such that we are asking the KP government to support us in the fight against terrorism."

Three-Day Annual Urs of Hazrat Kalu Baba Sarkar concludes in Mansar Sharif

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MANSAR SHARIF: The three-day annual Urs of Hazrat Kalu Baba Sarkar concluded in Mansar Sharif, District Attock, with great religious devotion, spiritual fervour and enthusiasm. On the third and final day, a concluding ceremony was held where special prayers were offered for the security, prosperity, development and stability of the country and nation, as well as for the unity and well-being of the Muslim Ummah and the wider Islamic world. Federal Minister Hanif Abbasi, Minister of State Daniyal Chaudhary, Raja Sarfraz Akram, custodian of the shrine of Hazrat Imam Bari Sarkar and Baba Kalu Sarkar, Ziaullah Shah, Sohail



Yousaf, Qadousi, Umar Qadousi, Additional Deputy Commissioner Attock Aneel Saeed, Raja Intiaz Janjua, Dr Raja Riaz Shahbaz Janjua, Dr Asif Janjua, Dr Haider Janjua, Raja Ayaz Janjua, Raja Ijaz Ahmed, Allah Bakhsh, Haji Qaiser Mahmood of Golra, Malik Abdul Razzaq Shah, Allah Ditta and a large number of devotees from different walks of life attended the three-day Urs celebrations.