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Bilawal seeks US lawmakers' support for Pakistan's 'peace mission' against Indian aggression

NEWS DESK

WASHINGTON: In a series of high-stakes discussions with members of the US House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee, former foreign minister and Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari cautioned about India's increasingly aggressive stance and its potential to destabilise South Asia.

He urged American lawmakers to support Pakistan's "mission of peace" and facilitate dialogue to avert a full-scale conflict in the region.

Leading a high-level Pakistani delegation, Bilawal engaged in extensive discussions on the current regional situation, the longstanding Kashmir issue, and the broader spectrum of US-Pakistan relations.

The Bilawal-led high-level diplomatic delegation has met various US lawmakers and held a series of significant meetings

with members of the US Congress on Capitol Hill to present Pakistan's stance and highlight New Delhi's provocations and aggression against Islamabad.

Members of the parliamentary delegation include Hina Rabbani Khar, Sherry Rehman, Dr Musadik Malik, Khuram Dastgir Khan, Jalil Abbas Jilani, Tehmina Janjua, Bushra Anjum Butt and Syed Faisal Subzwari.

The delegation's recent series of meetings with US lawmakers and diplomats come as part of Pakistan's diplomatic outreach initiative in the aftermath of the recent armed confrontation with India. Last month, both nuclear-armed neighbours carried out cross-border attacks against each other in the aftermath of the Pahalgam incident — wherein 26 tourists were killed in IIOJK — after which New Delhi launched airstrikes inside Pakistan prompting the latter to retaliate via Operation Bunyan-um-Marsoos.



Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif met Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman at Mina Palace.

PM Shehbaz, Saudi Crown Prince MBS discuss bilateral ties, regional situation

APP

RIYADH: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday held a meeting with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, during which both leaders exchanged Eid greetings.

The high-level meeting was also attended by Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar, Chief of Army Staff Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi, Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar, and Saudi Ambassador Nawaf bin Saeed Al-Malki.

During the meeting, both the sides reviewed the historic relations between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia and agreed to further strengthen bilateral cooperation.

Meanwhile, the regional situation was also discussed during the meeting.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif expressed

gratitude to the Saudi leadership for its role in easing tensions between Pakistan and India.

Earlier, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, along with their delegation, offered Nawafil inside the Holy Kaaba and thanked Allah Almighty for the great victory of Operation Bunyan-um-Marsoos.

According to a statement issued by the Prime Minister's Office, Shehbaz Sharif and Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir are on an official visit to Saudi Arabia on the special invitation of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

As per the statement, the Prime Minister and the Pakistani delegation performed Umrah during the night between Thursday and Friday as part of their visit.

The statement further mentioned that the door of the Holy Kaaba was specially opened for the Pakistani delegation.

PM, Field Marshal perform Umrah, express gratitude for Bunyanum Marsoos victory

ONLINE

MAKKAH: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, accompanied by Chief of Army Staff Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir and senior members of his cabinet, performed Umrah late Thursday night during an official visit to Saudi Arabia.

The high-profile visit, conducted at the invitation of Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, underscores the strengthening ties between Islamabad and Riyadh amid growing regional and economic cooperation.

In a rare gesture, the door of the Holy Kaaba in Makkah was specially opened for the visiting Pakistani delegation. The leaders offered Nawafil prayers and expressed gratitude for what they described as the success of Bunyanum Marsoos, a reference to ongoing efforts for national unity and resilience. During the sacred pilgrimage, the prime minister and his delegation also offered special prayers of thanks for recent developments in Pakistan's economic and social sectors. Supplications were made for the nation's continued prosperity and stability.

The Pakistani leadership also prayed for the wellbeing of oppressed Muslim communities around the world, with particular mention of the people of Kashmir and Palestine.

The prime minister was accompanied by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi, and Information Minister Attaullah Tarar.

CM Bugti congratulates Pakistani nation on occasion of Eid-ul Azah

APP

Quetta: Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfaraz Bugti congratulated the people of the province and the entire Pakistani nation on the auspicious occasion of Eid-ul-Adha on Friday. He said that this great day reminds us of the unparalleled sacrifice of Hazrat Ibrahim (AS) and Hazrat Ismail (AS), whose sole purpose was to express the pleasure and obedience of Allah.

The Chief Minister said in his message that Eid-ul-Adha teaches us a lesson of sacrifice, brotherhood, piety and mutual sympathy, this occasion invites us to combine our personal happiness with the well-being of others and help the needy, so that justice, love and brotherhood are promoted in the society.

He said that the people of Balochistan have always set examples of patience, sacrifice and solidarity and today we have to renew the resolve that we will remain united to build a peaceful, developed and prosperous Balochistan.

The Chief Minister appealed to the people to show religious spirit and discipline during Eid and include the poor, orphans, the needy and the downtrodden sections of the society in their happiness, special care should be taken for cleanliness and environmental protection on the occasion of Qurbani so that public health is not affected. He directed the concerned institutions to take all necessary measures to ensure public facilities, cleanliness, security and traffic flow during the Eid days. The Chief Minister of Balochistan expressed his resolve that the government would continue to fulfill its responsibilities for the welfare, education, health and establishment of law and order of the people with full determination and sincerity.

Pakistan condemns Israeli attacks on Beirut and southern Lebanon

ONLINE

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan strongly condemned Israeli airstrikes on Beirut's southern suburbs and parts of southern Lebanon on Friday, calling the attacks a violation of international law and a threat to regional peace.

Israel's June 5 attacks, carried out just ahead of the Muslim festival of Eidul Azha, breached Lebanese sovereignty and the terms of the November 2024 ceasefire agreement, according to a statement from Pakistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

"These strikes represent a blatant disregard for international norms," a MOFA spokesperson said, warning that the use of force could endanger civilian lives and spark broader instability.

Pakistan expressed solidarity with Lebanon, affirming support for its government and people "during this difficult time."

Islamabad also urged the United Nations and international ceasefire mediators to take immediate steps to hold Israel accountable

and prevent further escalation.

"Pakistan remains firmly committed to peace, justice, and the principles of international law," the statement added.

Moreover, Iran has also sharply criticised Israel's overnight air strikes on Beirut's southern suburbs and parts of southern Lebanon, calling them "a blatant act of aggression" and a violation of Lebanese sovereignty.

The strikes targeted the densely populated Dahiyeh area, a known Hezbollah stronghold, as well as locations in South Lebanon.

Israel claimed the strikes hit underground Hezbollah facilities used for drone manufacturing and storage. The Israeli military stated that at least 100 housing units were destroyed in the operation, allegedly used by Hezbollah operatives.

Hezbollah has not commented on the Israeli claims.

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baqaei condemned the raids, saying they reflect Israel's disregard for regional peace and Lebanese sovereignty.

Nawaz Sharif offers Eid prayers in London, prays for Pakistan's progress and prosperity

INP

LONDON: Former prime minister and PML-N President Nawaz Sharif prayed for the country's development after offering Eid prayers in London.

"May Allah put Pakistan on the path of progress," said the three-time prime minister after offering Eid prayer.

He added, "May Allah bless the people of Pakistan with happiness. May Allah grant joy to all Muslims across the Islamic world."

Earlier, PML-N supreme urged the United Nations to play its role in resolving Kashmir issue.

Speaking to media in London on Monday, Nawaz Sharif stated that Pakistan's overall situation is improving and the country's stature at the global level is rising.

He also praised the performance of Punjab government being led by Maryam Nawaz.

The three-time prime minister also lauded China, Türkiye and Azerbaijan for supporting Pakistan during difficult times. "It is the collective responsibility of international community to support Pakistan's legitimate issues and UN must take a leading role in resolving them," said Nawaz Sharif.

Two Indian-sponsored terrorists killed in Balochistan IBO: ISPR

APP

RAWALPINDI: Security forces targeted a group of terrorists during an intelligence-based operation in Kolpur, Kacchi District, Balochistan, the military's media wing reported on Friday.

The operation, launched based on reports of the presence of terrorists affiliated with the Indian-backed proxy group Fitna al Hindustan, was confirmed by the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR).

The security forces swiftly engaged the terrorists' location, resulting in a fierce exchange of fire. The operation led to the neutralisation of two terrorists, who were confirmed to be sponsored by India, ISPR said.

In addition to eliminating the terrorists, security forces recovered a significant cache of weapons and ammunition. These individuals were actively involved in multiple terrorist activities orchestrated by India in the region, the statement added.

The operation continues with ongoing sanitisation efforts to eliminate any remaining threats in the area. The ISPR reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to eliminating Indian-sponsored terrorism and bringing the perpetrators to justice.



Former foreign minister and Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari (left) meets US Senator Tom Cotton.

Justice Rozi Khan Bareech Sworn in as Acting Chief Justice of Balochistan High Court

NEWS DESK

Quetta: Justice Rozi Khan Bareech was officially sworn in as the Acting Chief Justice of the Balochistan High Court during a solemn oath-taking ceremony held at the Governor House Quetta. The oath was administered by Governor Balochistan Jaffar Khan Mandokhail.

Justice Bareech has been appointed as the Acting Chief Justice following the retirement of Chief Justice Ejaz Khan Swati. The appointment comes at a critical time for the province's legal system, with growing emphasis on judicial reforms, case backlog reduction, and access to justice.

The ceremony was attended by prominent

legal figures including former governors Justice (R) Amirul Mulik Mengal and Amanullah Khan Yasinzi, sitting judges of the Balochistan High Court, Supreme Court Bar Association President Rauf Atta, High Court Bar Association President Advocate Attaullah Lango, and a large number of senior legal practitioners.

Held in a dignified and professional setting, the event reflected the institutional integrity and

judicial traditions of Pakistan. Legal experts have expressed optimism that Justice Rozi Khan Bareech's tenure will contribute to strengthening judicial independence and promoting timely dispute resolution in the province.



QUETTA: Women buying artificial jewelry on the eve of Eid-ul-Azha.

Pakistan acted with Maturity during Recent Conflict with India: Chairman Senate

ONLINE

MULTAN: Chairman Senate, Yusuf Raza Gilani said on Friday that Pakistan was a responsible nuclear power, acted with maturity during the recent conflict with India following the Pahalgam attack.

Speaking to the media after inaugurating a bakery at Old Shujabad Road, Yusuf Raza Gilani praised the joint role of the military and civil leadership for exercising patience to de-escalate the situation on borders.

He noted that Pakistani nation responded unitedly to the war threats, especially after India attempted to unilaterally block water supplies to the country.

Highlighting the government's principled stance, Gilani said that Pakistan had immediately called for a neutral investigation into the

Pahalgam incident, but India arrogantly refused to accept the proposal.

He emphasized that defensive steps taken by Pakistan were appreciated globally.

Gilani reiterated that both Pakistan and India were declared nuclear states, and warned that any misadventure would trigger chaos and destruction in the region.

Referring to PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari's recent visit to the United States, he said Bilawal presented a positive image of Pakistan to the US administration.

Gilani claimed that Bilawal effectively countered India's false narrative in US circles by proving that Pakistan was a peace-loving country with no expansionist agenda, working to promote regional stability.

He also recalled the sacrifices made by his forefathers in creation of Pakistan, saying the

legacy of dedication continues today through his efforts aimed at placing the country on the path of progress and prosperity.

Drawing a parallel with the ongoing Palestinian struggle, Gilani said the martyrs of Palestine and Pakistan's security personnel would be remembered for their sacrifices, especially during Eidul Azha.

In response to a question, Gilani said over 1.7 million Pakistanis live in the United Kingdom, where 10 members of the House of Lords hold Pakistani nationality, including the Lord Mayor.

He concluded the event with prayers for national unity and lasting solidarity. MNA Ali Musa Gilani, MPA Rana Iqbal Siraj, and other local PPP leaders, along with a large number of residents and party workers, were present on the occasion.

Pilgrims 'stone the devil' as Hajj concludes in Saudi Arabia

MONITORING DESK

MAKKAH: Pilgrims performed the last major ritual of Hajj — the "stoning of the devil" — on Friday, as Muslims around the globe celebrated the beginning of the Eid ul Adha holiday.

Starting at dawn, the more than 1.6 million Muslims taking part in the pilgrimage threw seven stones at each of three concrete walls symbolising the devil in the Mina valley, on the outskirts of the holy city of Makkah.

This ritual commemorates Prophet Ibrahim's act of stoning Satan at the very spots where, according to tradition, the devil attempted to dissuade him from obeying Allah's command to sacrifice his son. A day earlier, pilgrims converged on Mount Arafat, praying and reciting Quranic verses at the 70-metre (230-foot)



rocky rise near Makkah, where the Holy Prophet Mohammad is believed to have given his last sermon. Many climbed the mount despite the searing heat, though numbers had thinned by midday following official warnings for pilgrims to stay inside between 10:00am and 4:00pm. This year's Hajj saw authorities implementing a range of heat mitigation efforts alongside a wide-ranging crackdown on illicit pilgrims, resulting in noticeably thinner crowds and a heavy security presence.

(ETPB) has completed all arrangements for two major Sikh religious events:

Shaheedi Day of Guru Arjan Dev Ji and the Death Anniversary of Maharaja Ranjit Singh

Maqsood Khalid

LAHORE: Under the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony, the Evacuee Trust Property Board (ETPB) has completed all arrangements for two major Sikh religious events: Shaheedi Day of Guru Arjan Dev Ji and the Death Anniversary of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. These include facilities for accommodation, transport, meals, medical services, and overall hospitality for the pilgrims.

A key administrative meeting was held at the Shrines Branch under the chairmanship of Additional Secretary Shrines, Saifullah Khokhar. He stated that, following the directives of Federal Minister Sardar Muhammad Yousaf and ETPB Chairman Dr. Sajid Mehmood Chauhan, all preparations have been finalized. As in previous years, a red carpet reception will be arranged for Indian Sikh pilgrims.

According to the schedule, Sardar Ramesh Singh Arora (President, Pakistan

Sikh Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee) and Additional Secretary Shrines Saifullah Khokhar, along with local Sikh leaders and media representatives, will welcome Indian Sikh pilgrims at Wagah Border on June 9.

However, permission for travel from the Indian side has not yet been granted — a regrettable matter. The welcome will be symbolic, aiming to present Pakistan's image as a peace-loving and minority-friendly nation committed to interfaith harmony.

Guru Arjan Dev Ji, the fifth Sikh Guru, is revered as the first martyr of Sikhism, known for his principles of peace, tolerance, and religious freedom. His martyrdom day holds great significance for the Sikh community and is commemorated with deep respect worldwide.

Both religious events will be celebrated with full devotion at Gurdwaras across Pakistan, where local Sikh communities will participate.



Jamate-Islami (JI) Chief, Hafiz Naeem-ur-Rehman addresses to media persons during press conference, at Idara-e-Noorul Haq in Karachi.

Citizens advised to dispose of sacrificial waste responsibly, avoid airports

INP

ISLAMABAD: The Capital Development Authority (CDA) and other city management officials on Friday distributed biodegradable bags among citizens to collect waste from sacrificial animals, advising them not to dispose of the remains near airports, as this can pose a risk to airplane safety and put passengers' lives at risk.

CDA Spokesperson talking to a private news channel said that the authority has issued guidelines for safe disposal of Eid waste, emphasizing the prohibition of dumping

near airports to ensure aviation safety and environmental protection.

Citizens are advised to use biodegradable bags for hygienic waste disposal, contributing to a safe environment, he added.

Disposing of sacrificial waste near airports poses significant risks to aviation safety, he said, adding, the presence of waste can attract birds and other wildlife, increasing the likelihood of bird strikes, which can be catastrophic for aircraft.

Moreover, improper waste disposal can also lead to environmental pollution, contaminating soil and water sources, he mentioned.

Therefore, it is crucial for citizens to adhere to the guidelines and use designated waste disposal facilities to mitigate these risks, he added.

PIA also presented a report highlighting the dangers of waste disposal near airports, citing a close call last year when an aircraft encountered a potential bird strike hazard due to improper waste management.

The airline warned that such incidents can have catastrophic consequences and urged citizens to dispose of Eid waste responsibly, adhering to designated waste disposal protocols to ensure aviation safety.

IGP Rizvi orders robust Eid security, deploys 3,500 personnel

APP

ISLAMABAD: Inspector General of Police (IGP) Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi presided over a high-level meeting at the Central Police Office to review the security arrangements for Eid-ul-Adha, directing enhanced security and surveillance measures across the federal capital.

A public relations officer told APP on Friday that the meeting was attended by all DIGs, SSPs, and SPs of Islamabad Police, during which the IGP ordered the deployment of over 3,500 officers and personnel to ensure the safety and security of citizens during the Eid holidays.

IG Rizvi said the security strategy includes intensified monitoring, snap checking, and patrolling throughout the city, especially around Eid congregations, cattle markets, recreational spots, and commercial centers. IG Rizvi said a special security plan has been formulated for Chand Raat, with particular focus on shopping areas, markets, and entry-exit points. Patrolling units will be active on foot, vehicles, and motorcycles to ensure swift responses and vigilance. IG Rizvi said surveillance through Safe City cameras must be enhanced for effective monitoring, while all control rooms should remain fully functional with upgraded communication systems to respond to any emergencies.

KP Governor highlights women's pivotal role in national development

APP

Islamabad: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Faisal Karim Kundi today affirmed that women are playing a vital and indispensable role in the development and prosperity of Pakistan.

Speaking to a delegation of a non-governmental organization comprised of women in Islamabad, Governor Kundi underscored

that women's empowerment and ensuring equal employment opportunities for them are among the top priorities of the current government.

He further elaborated that concerted efforts are underway to enhance women's participation across critical sectors, including health, education, and employment.



Knives are being selling at a shop in connection of Eid-ul- Azha coming ahead, in Quetta.

Police arrest 59 suspects in seven days

INP

LAHORE: Punjab Police claimed on Friday to have arrested 59 suspects and recovered

168 stolen animals during the past seven days across the province. According to police, the

recovered livestock includes 23 cows, 124 goats and 21 other animals, all of which have been

returned to their rightful owners. As part of the security plan, 4,000 police officers and personnel have been deployed across 230 cattle markets in Punjab, with 1,000 officials specifically assigned to guard 11 markets in Lahore alone. Special police checkpoints have been set up around these markets throughout the province. Additionally, 284 patrolling teams —

including personnel from the Dolphin Squad and the Police Response Unit — are actively monitoring the surroundings. "We are fully committed to ensuring the safety of people involved in the buying and selling.

Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Orders Foolproof Security and Traffic Arrangements for Eid-ul-Adha

INP

Lahore: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has directed that foolproof security arrangements be ensured across the province on the occasion of Eid-ul-Adha. She has also issued special instructions to enhance security at cattle markets.

The Chief Minister ordered continuous traffic monitoring in Lahore and other cities and instructed that traffic management around cattle markets be improved.

She also emphasized strict implementation of official transport fares across all cities. In this regard, transport vehicles must display fare lists and valid fitness certificates on their windshields. Overcharging will not be tolerated — extra fares must be refunded, and strict action will be taken against violators. Maryam Nawaz Sharif directed livestock officials to ensure their presence in cattle markets, while administration and police officers have been instructed to stay active in the field.



QUETTA: A shop keeper arranging sweet due to high demand on the eve of Eid-ul-Azha.



Bengaluru pledge financial aid for victims of IPL crowd surge

SPORTS DESK

BENGALURU: Royal Challengers Bengaluru said Thursday they stood "united" with fans as the Indian Premier League champions pledged one million Indian rupees (\$11,654) to each family of the 11 fans who died in a crowd surge outside the team's home stadium during celebrations following their maiden IPL title.

Hundreds of thousands had packed the streets in the southern Indian city of Bengaluru on Wednesday to welcome home their hero Virat Kohli and his RCB team-mates after they beat Punjab Kings in a thrilling final of the IPL's 18th edition, the world's richest T20 cricket league.

But the euphoria of the vast crowds ended in disaster when 11 fans died in a stampede near the city's M. Chinnaswamy Stadium, where the players were parading the trophy.

Most of the dead were young fans aged between 14 and 29 who had gone out just to catch a glimpse of their heroes. Dozens of abandoned shoes and flip-flops littered the site in the aftermath.

The franchise will also launch a support fund for the injured. Indian media have widely reported the team earned \$2.3 million in prize money alone for taking the title on Wednesday.

"The unfortunate incident in Bengaluru yesterday has caused a lot of anguish and pain to the RCB family," the team said in a statement on Thursday. "Our fans will always remain at the heart of everything that we do. We remain united in grief.

"As a mark of respect and a gesture of solidarity, RCB has announced a financial support of 10 lakh (one million) Indian Rupees to each of the 11 families of the deceased. In addition, a fund called RCB Cares is also being created to support fans injured in this tragic incident."

Kohli, who top-scored in the final, said he was "at a loss for words" after celebrations of a dream IPL crown turned to tragedy.

Police used mild force to disperse people outside the stadium, eyewitnesses said, but the crowd was "extremely difficult" to control.

Lakshminarayan, who lost his 14-year-old granddaughter in the crush, said his family carried the child in a motor rickshaw to hospital.

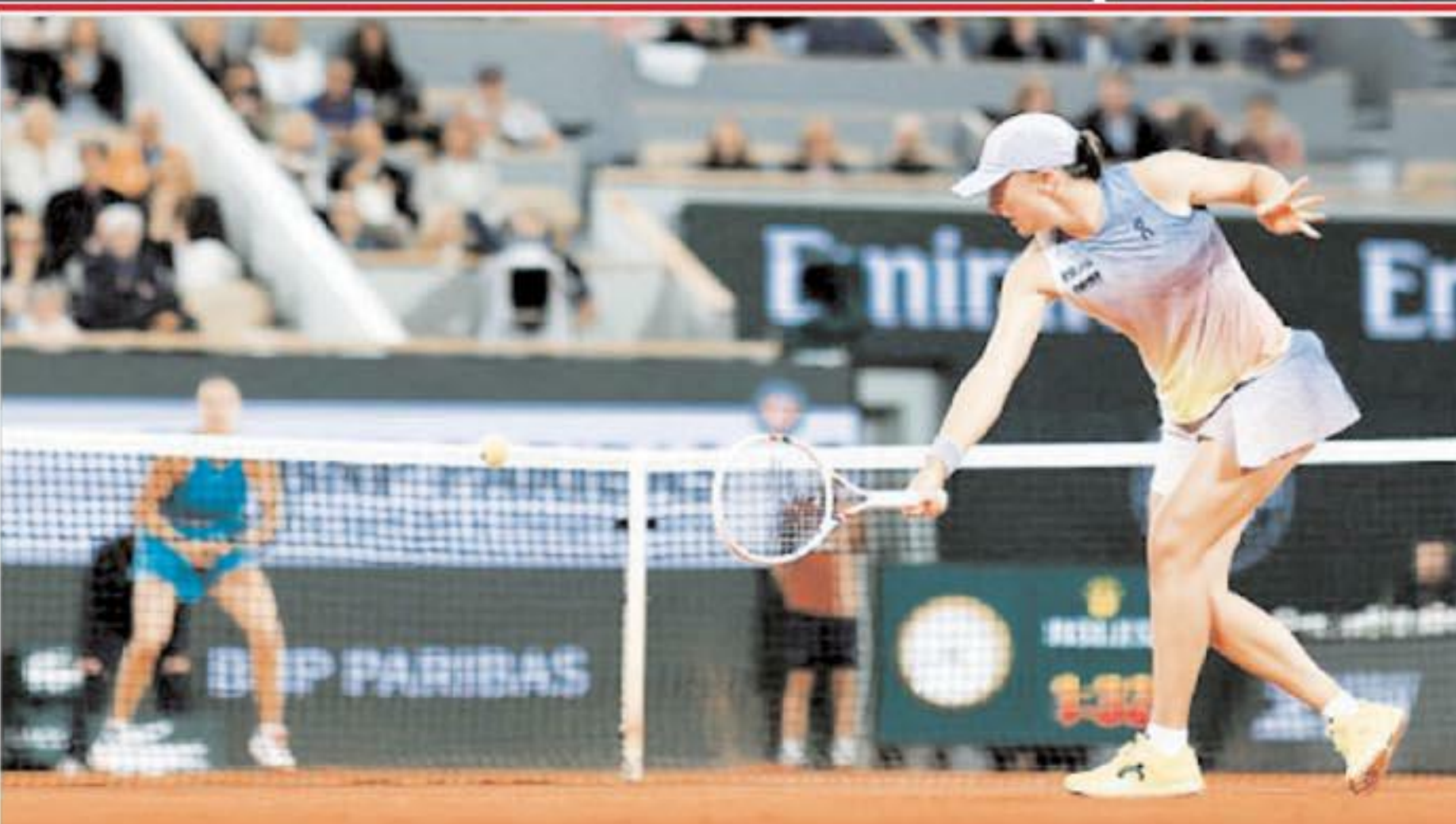
He said celebrations should have been delayed to prepare for the widely expected mass crowds.

"There was no need to conduct celebrations the very next day, they should have postponed it to a week and organised it a better way," he said. "You should take all precautionary measures, they should have police protection and follow the queue system."

One of the people injured described how a "huge crowd" had crushed her. "They stamped on me," said the woman, who did not give her name, from a wheelchair. "I was not able to breathe. I fell unconscious."

Street food vendor Manoj Kumar mourned the death of his 18-year-old son. "I wanted him to go to college," Kumar told the Indian Express newspaper. "I brought him up with a lot of care. Now he is gone."

A grieving mother outside a city mortuary said her 22-year-old engineering student son had also died. "He was crazy about RCB," she was quoted as saying by the Indian Express. "He died in an RCB shirt. They danced when RCB won and now he is gone."



POLAND'S Iga Swiatek plays a backhand return against Aryna Sabalenka of Belarus during their French Open semi-final at Roland Garros.

Sabalenka downs Swiatek as Gauff ends Boisson's dream run at French Open

SPORTS DESK

PARIS: Aryna Sabalenka ended Iga Swiatek's French Open reign with a devastating third-set performance on Thursday to tee up a Roland Garros final against Coco Gauff after the American knocked out French hero Lois Boisson.

The Belarusian snapped Swiatek's French Open winning streak at 26 matches with a 7-6 (7/1), 4-6, 6-0 success to reach her first final in the clay-court Grand Slam.

"Iga is the toughest opponent, especially on the clay and at Roland Garros," said Sabalenka after becoming the first player to defeat Swiatek in a deciding set at the French Open. "I'm proud that I was able to get this win."

World number two Gauff ended the dream run of 361st-ranked wildcard Boisson with a 6-1, 6-2 victory in the second semi-final on Court Philippe Chatrier.

Gauff and Sabalenka are level at 5-5 in their head-to-head record and have won one each of their two meetings at major tournaments.

Sabalenka edged a topsy-turvy first set that featured eight breaks of serve in a tie-break, before Swiatek hit back to level the match.

The finale turned out to be a complete anti-climax, as Swiatek made 12 unforced errors in the third set and won only six points.

"I'm glad that I found my serve. It was a bit easier with the serve," added the 27-year-old Sabalenka. "What can I say, 6-0 — it couldn't be much more perfect than that!"

Sabalenka is targeting a fourth Grand Slam title and first not on hard courts, after winning last year's US Open and the Australian Open back-to-back in 2023 and 2024.

Swiatek has still not reached a WTA final since lifting the Coupe Suzanne Lenglen 12 months ago.

She showed signs of a revival on the Paris clay where she has dominated since winning as a teenager in 2020, but her game deserted her in the deciding set as she slipped to only the third French Open defeat of her career.

"I love playing here, so for sure I'm happy that I was fortunate enough to play so many great tournaments here," Swiatek said.

Sabalenka has now won their last two meetings, and five of 13 in total.

This was the first time the pair, the dominant players in women's tennis of the past few years, have gone head-to-head at a Grand Slam tournament since Swiatek's win in the 2022 US Open semi-finals en route to the title.

Sabalenka will be the favourite to lift the trophy when she takes on Gauff, to whom she lost in the 2023 US Open final.

Swiatek, who was bidding to become the first woman to win four successive French Opens in over a century, will drop to seventh in the world rankings next week.

Boisson had got the better of third seed Jessica Pegula and world number six Mirra Andreeva in the previous two rounds but the test provided by Gauff proved to be a step too far.

The home crowd were silenced by a ruthless opening set from the second seed.

Boisson briefly raised the French fans from their slumber by breaking back in the second set, only to immediately surrender it straight back.

Gauff clinically finished the job after just 69 minutes on court to book her spot in a second French Open final.

"When you guys were chanting her name, I was thinking my name," Gauff told the crowd in her on-court interview. "Obviously there's still a lot of work to do, but for now I'll enjoy this one and then prepare for the final tomorrow."

PHF seeks govt funds for hotel accommodation in Kuala Lumpur: sources

SPORTS DESK

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Hockey Federation (PHF) has been vocal about its financial constraints hindering participation in international competitions.

However, according to a letter from the PHF itself, the federation holds a bank balance amounting to millions of rupees.

Reliable sources indicate that the PHF requested government funds to cover expenses totalling \$51,296 for accommodation at a hotel in Kuala Lumpur during the "FIIH Hockey Men's Nations Cup 2025." This request was made despite the federation's substantial bank reserves.

In response, the Pakistan Sports Board (PSB) took the initiative to arrange air tickets for the national team's participation in the event only.

Later on, PHF informed the Pakistan Sports Board that it has required funds for hotel accommodation in its account, seeking NOC for remitting the foreign currency for the said payment from the Finance Ministry and State Bank of Pakistan.

It's noteworthy that over the past two years, the PSB has disbursed a significant sum of Rs19,667 million to the PHF.

Sources in PSB stated that despite multiple written reminders, the federation has failed to submit any auditable financial accounts. Consequently, in a board meeting held in December 2024, the PSB decided to withhold any additional funding until the PHF ensures financial transparency.

Sources reveal that the PSB has compiled a detailed report on the matter and forwarded it to the Ministry of Inter-Provincial Coordination for further high-level deliberation.

When contacted DG PSB Yasir Pirzada, he refused to comment on PHF affairs, however, he said that the PSB had decided that now onward only those federations which will provide complete details of audited account would be provided funding.

"We have linked funding with the performance of federations and audit of

already provided funds. No new funds will be released for any federation until the record of previously allocated funds is provided," he said.



Pakistan team celebrates scoring a goal during Asian Champions Trophy match against China

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The cost of relief

ALTHOUGH bound by the IMF's stern conditions, the federal government appears desperate to provide tax relief to middle-class salaried individuals as well as businesses, especially the real estate lobby, in the upcoming budget.

This desire seems to have grown stronger in the aftermath of Pakistan's recent tactical military win against India as the ruling party hopes to turn the 'feel-good factor' in the country into wider political support for itself. The question, however, remains: can the government secure 'concessions' from the multi-lateral lender to implement its 'relief plans' to win over middle-class voters?

What we have seen is that the government was compelled to delay the announcement of its budget by more than a week to June 10 when the IMF mission left the country after inconclusive policy discussions on Islamabad's budget proposals last month.

No final agreement was reached due to differences mainly on the proposed increase in defence expenditure and tax cuts for individuals and businesses.

The Fund later said in a statement that the discussions would continue virtually regarding the budget "over the coming days", revealing some disagreement. The Fund added that the talks "focused on actions to enhance revenue — including by bolstering compliance and expanding the tax base — and prioritise expenditure".

The outcome of the ongoing virtual budget talks remains inconclusive — otherwise we would have heard from the Fund or the government that the differences had been sorted out.

The IMF feels that the government's expenditure and tax relief proposals will hit the overarching target of the primary budget surplus — whose size determines the reduction or increase in public debt in a given fiscal year — of 1.6pc of GDP agreed upon by the two sides in policy discussions.

The lender wants the authorities to come up with credible proposals, identifying alternative sources of revenue to offset the impact of the increase in defence and other expenditures and the cuts in taxes.

The lender has valid reason to be concerned. The widening shortfall of more than Rs1tr in tax collection in the first 11 months of the current fiscal year, despite the imposition of record new taxes and the blocking of tax refunds, justifies the IMF's apprehensions.

The massive shortfall in tax recovery makes it clear that the FBR may not be able to meet even the revised collection target. The IMF had recently agreed to slash the tax collection target of nearly Rs13tr by Rs640bn for the full fiscal year.

With the Fund insisting on fortifying the primary budget surplus target against any additional expenditures and potential revenue slippages, the nation's fiscal authorities have a formidable challenge ahead of them as they try to balance the IMF's programme goals with the government's growing desire to deepen the feel-good factor through some fiscal extravagance.

By Kamal Ahmed

Reimagining Pakistan's financial architecture

Imagine the year 1624. The world has not yet imagined New York, let alone the Stock Exchange that would one day shape global finance. The Industrial Revolution is still more than a century away. Only two decades earlier, the Dutch East India Company had established the world's first stock exchange in Amsterdam, pioneering a financial revolution that would stretch across continents.

Around the new year, devastating floods strike the town of Utrecht in the low-lying Netherlands. Dikes collapse, fields drown, and livelihoods are swept away. With no central aid system and few reserves, local authorities are unable to finance the urgent tasks of recovery and reconstruction. The flooding brings not only physical destruction but also mounting governance risks — the credibility of Utrecht's institutions is at stake. Faced with this existential crisis, a small Dutch water board makes a radical choice: it issues a bond. Not to finance war or conquest, but to fund protection, to rebuild the dikes and hold back the sea.

That bond, remarkably, still pays interest today — more than four centuries later. A timeless act of climate foresight, now held by a foundation affiliated with the New York Stock Exchange, in a world that would not have recognised itself in 1624.

Fast forward to the year 2022. Four hundred years later, the setting is different, but the crisis is eerily familiar. This time, it is not Utrecht, but Pakistan. A historic monsoon season unleashes unprecedented flooding across the country. Over 33 million people are affected. Crops, homes, schools, and critical infrastructure are swept away. According to post-disaster assessments, the scale of destruction is staggering: over \$30 billion in damages and losses. As in Utrecht, urgent questions arise: Who will rebuild the bridges, restore the schools, replant the fields? And how will we protect against the next disaster?

In response, the government of Pakistan launches an international appeal. Development partners pledge support. Humanitarian assistance trickles in. And yet, months later, only a fraction of the required financing materialises.

The financing gap remains wide, well over 80 per cent of the estimated needs are left unmet. The contrast is striking: In 1624, a small town facing ruin created a financial instrument to safeguard its people and infrastructure — one that outlived empires and continues to pay interest today. In 2022, a nation of 240 million — with institutions, financial markets, and international partnerships — struggles to muster timely and adequate funding for recovery. Despite all the progress in economics, institutions, and global finance, we have not taken as bold or

lasting a step as Utrecht did four centuries ago.

The reason? Our public finance system wasn't built to anticipate climate shocks. It reacts — slowly and often inadequately — to crises that are becoming more frequent and severe. Pakistan's debt obligations are growing, while fiscal space for climate adaptation is shrinking. We spend more servicing past loans than preparing for future risks.

And yet, there is ambition. Pakistan has pledged to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050. It has drafted a national green taxonomy and is submitting a Request for Support under the Global Shield Against Climate Risks, a new initiative aimed at helping vulnerable countries secure pre-arranged, risk-layered financing that will empower Pakistan to deploy more ex-ante financial instruments.

These efforts, however, remain fragmented. We have yet to issue a sovereign green bond or a climate resilience sukuk. A national resilience facility to crowd in private finance is still lacking. Climate policy and financial planning remain largely disconnected, when they should be speaking the same language. Beyond physical risks like floods and droughts, Pakistan is increasingly vulnerable to transition risks — the economic fallout of a world shifting rapidly toward green finance, carbon pricing and climate-aligned trade. Without a coherent climate-finance architecture, Pakistan may find itself locked out of green capital markets, excluded from carbon-adjusted trade regimes or unable to attract foreign investment.

The risk is environmental, economic and deeply structural. Tweaking the current system isn't enough. Pakistan needs to reimagine its financial architecture to make it fit for the climate era.

This means five shifts. One, climate-smart public investment: We need to embed climate risk into public financial management. Every rupee spent should be screened for climate resilience, not just cost-effectiveness. Public investment must become an engine of adaptation and mitigation. Two, sovereign green bonds and sukuk: Pakistan must confidently enter global green capital markets.

A resilience-linked sukuk could fund flood infrastructure, early warning systems, or climate-smart agriculture. These instruments show that Pakistan is not just climate-vulnerable but climate-ready. Three, risk-layered financial protection: Our financial response must match the structure of risk. That means contingency funds for high-frequency, low-impact events; parametric insurance for seasonal droughts or floods; and catastrophe bonds for low-frequency, high-impact disasters. These proposals are already part of Pakistan's Global Shield request, but implementation must follow ambition.

Four, a green financing facility and not just another fund: Some experts warn against creating more funds. That's fair. But this isn't about duplication — it's about consolidation. A Green Financing Facility can pool public, donor and private capital under one roof. It can coordinate projects, provide de-risking instruments, and support subnational financing windows. Instead of scattered efforts, we need a national engine that drives climate-smart investment. Five, local access and just transitions: Resilience is local. Provinces and cities must be technically and financially empowered to finance their climate solutions. Whether it's water management in Balochistan or rooftop solar in Sindh, a national system must enable localised action. Pakistan is also underperforming in two key global shifts: ESG investing and carbon markets. Global capital is rapidly moving towards portfolios aligned with Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) standards. But without clear disclosure frameworks, ESG incentives or sustainability reporting infrastructure, Pakistan risks being left out of this realignment. Simultaneously, Pakistan holds significant potential in voluntary carbon markets through mangrove restoration, regenerative farming, renewable energy and beyond. But we lack a transparent carbon registry, a credible MRV (monitoring, reporting, verification) system, and governance structures to ensure revenues are shared equitably. With the right policy and oversight, carbon finance could become a new revenue stream — not for the treasury alone, but for communities on the frontlines. To make all this work, we need coordination instead of chaos. Institutions like the Ministry of Finance, NDMA, NDRMF, State Bank of Pakistan, SECP, and the Ministry of Climate Change must align around a shared framework for climate finance. This is not a one-agency job but a whole-of-government mandate. We also need better project pipelines, simplified access to multilateral funds like the Green Climate Fund and readiness to deploy emerging instruments like debt-for-climate swaps.

In 1624, the Dutch issued a bond to protect their people from rising waters. It still functions centuries later because it was rooted in responsibility, vision and design. Today, Pakistan faces a similar choice. We can continue reacting to crisis after crisis, or we can build a system that's anticipatory, inclusive, and green.

This is about more than climate. It's about sovereignty. About economic resilience. About future-proofing a nation of 240 million.

The Dutch built a dike. We must build a financial architecture that can hold back a rising tide — and carry us toward a fairer, greener future.

By Zarrar Khuhro

The Third Temple

ON Monday, May 26, Israel celebrated Jerusalem Day. This marks the day when Israeli forces annexed East Jerusalem and the West Bank after the 1967 war. The celebrations saw thousands of far-right Israelis take to the streets and engage in the national pastime of harassing Arabs. Buoyed by the presence and support of Israeli National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir, they marched through the Muslim quarter raising genocidal slogans, calling for "death to Arabs", mocking the plight of Gazans and uttering blasphemous slogans attacking Islam and its revered figures. All of this was conducted under the watchfully protective eye of Israeli police.

As per past practice they also stormed the Al Aqsa compound where they again called for a new Nakba and the extermination of Palestinians while singing and dancing and performing Talmudic rituals. One of the poster boys for the Gaza genocide, ultra-Zionist Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich took to the stage where he spoke of "victory", "occupation" and "settlement" as his most prized objectives. In a statement that was truly musical to his audience's ears, he also called for reconstructing "the Temple here" on the site of Al Aqsa Mosque, one of Islam's holiest sites.

Israeli PM Netanyahu, too, made an appearance, releasing a video of himself walking through a massive underground tunnel beneath Al Aqsa. These tunnels, Israel claims, are dug in order to further archaeological research but it is widely believed that the real purpose is to weaken the foundations of Al Aqsa and find any archaeological evidence that would "justify" a complete takeover of the Temple Mount (which Arabs refer to

as Haram al-Sharif) itself and, eventually, lead to the building of the so-called Third Temple.

This begs the question: what were the First and Second Temples? Well, the First Temple was built around 957 BC and was destroyed by the Babylonians a few centuries later during the siege of Jerusalem.

Why build a new temple? A Third Temple?

The Second Temple was constructed in 538 BC but destroyed in 70 AD by the Roman Empire after a bloody and ill-fated Jewish rebellion against Roman rule. All that remains of the Second Temple is the western wall, popularly known as the

Wailing Wall which is now the site that just about every American politician must travel to and where they must pledge allegiance to the flag of Israel, thus unlocking the funds and support of the almighty Israeli lobbies.

Why build a new temple? A Third Temple? Well, in certain Jewish religious factions the prevailing thought is that the Third Temple must be built in order to ensure the coming of the messiah who would then presumably usher in an unending golden age of Jewish supremacy in which all other nations would be subordinated to their will.

But first, Al Aqsa has to be demolished. The first real voice raised in favour of this was that of Shlomo Goren, the former chief rabbi of the Israeli 'Defence' Forces.

In 1967, he led a group of 50 Jews into the compound for prayers, and called for the rebuilding of the Temple.

Back in those days Israel was still somewhat constrained in terms of not absolutely offending the Arab population in the occupied territories or,

despite a stunning victory in the 1967 war, of providing another *causis belli* to their Arab neighbours. And so, Rabbi Goren was censured and a ruling from Israel's chief rabbis stated that it was forbidden for Jews to enter the Temple Mount for reasons of ritual impurity that are too complex to address in this column. Despite the official reticence, excavations (under the aegis of Israel's religious ministry) began that year and have continued since with serious damage to several buildings of the Muslim quarter.

But Israel in 2025 is now very different from the Israel of 1967 which, while still an occupying supremacist power bent on annihilating Palestinian nationhood, was not caught up in the genocidal religious frenzy that defines it today, and perhaps for all time to come.

In today's Israel, calls to finally destroy Al Aqsa and rebuild the Third Temple are now common. Soldiers in the Israeli forces openly wear Third Temple patches on their uniforms (almost always sold out) and mount banners proclaiming the conquest of Al Aqsa onto their military vehicles.

They also have the support of many moneyed organisations like the Temple Institute, the Temple Mount Faithful and the Eretz Yisrael Faithful movements among others.

More crucially, they also have the support of many American evangelicals whose eschatological beliefs also welcome the rebuilding of the temple as a precursor to the advent of the messiah. Of course, the evangelicals' messiah would then convert the world, the Jews included (by fire and sword if needed) to their own particular beliefs, but for the moment both movements stand aligned. The clock is ticking.

DAILY MIRROR

Presence of militant groups on Afghan soil is challenging regional security

APP

ISLAMABAD: The presence of various militant groups on Afghan soil poses a significant challenge to regional security, according to veteran journalist and former Associated Press correspondent Kathy Gannon.

She added that while Afghanistan might not want all the militant groups on its territory nor did Kabul invite them all, but they were still there.

She was speaking at an event titled Geopolitical Shifts and Security Challenges: Pakistan, Afghanistan, and the Regional Power Play organized by the Institute of Regional Studies (IRS), said a press release issued here on Friday.

While appreciating recent positive developments in relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan, Gannon emphasized the importance of restoring trust between Pakistan and Afghanistan. She was of the view that Pakistan could better influence the Afghan government by treating it as an equal and a partner in pursuing its regional objectives.

Ambassador Asif Durrani, Pakistan's former Special Representative for Afghanistan, referred to Pakistan and Afghanistan as twin brothers who had come to each other's help whenever needed notwithstanding the state of their relationship at the time. He hailed the upgradation of diplomatic relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan and the inclusion of Afghanistan in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) as positive developments. He added that in the recent high-level trilateral meeting between Pakistan, Afghanistan, and China, the three countries had agreed to oppose terrorism, carry out law enforcement and security cooperation, remain vigilant against external interference in the internal affairs of regional countries, and safeguard regional peace and security. Ambassador Durrani was of the view that there had been a decline in terrorist attacks in Pakistan since the positive development in diplomatic relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

President IRS Ambassador Jauhar Saleem said that despite challenges, regional geopolitics and mutual interests had continually pushed both countries to engage and re-engage across various levels. He added that recent

developments pointed toward a more constructive phase in bilateral engagement and expressed his hope that the trilateral dialogue among Pakistan, Afghanistan, and China most recently held in Beijing would strengthen regional cooperation on counterterrorism, stability, and economic integration.

Aarish Khan, the Head of the Afghanistan Program at IRS, maintained that while the Taliban had not acceded to the demands of the international community on political inclusion, women education, and individual freedoms, they were still making good progress in improving diplomatic relations not only with important capitals like Beijing, Moscow, and Islamabad but also with the UN as was demonstrated by the Doha III talks last year. He added that the Afghan interim government had taken concrete steps against the TTP in the recent past.

Ambassador Abrar Hussain, Pakistan's former Ambassador to Afghanistan, also argued that Islamabad's top priority in Afghanistan was to promote peace and stability notwithstanding whichever government was in power in the country.



MAKKAH, SAUDI ARABIA: Prime Minister, Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif along with Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, Chief of Army Staff (COAS) and Pakistani delegation are performing Umrah in Makkah.

Ex-federal minister Abbas Afridi succumbs to burn injuries sustained in gas leak explosion

INP

PESHAWAR: Former federal minister and Senator Abbas Afridi on Friday succumbed to burn injuries sustained in a gas leak explosion a day earlier, while three others were wounded. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Rescue 1122 spokesperson Bilal Ahmad Faizi told Dawn.com that their team had rushed Afridi and three others to Kohat Combined Military Hospital, from where Afridi was taken to a burn centre in Kharian, Punjab, in a helicopter.

Nouman Ali, spokesperson for the Kohat police, told Dawn.com, "Afridi was in a critical condition and succumbed to his injuries in the hospital. His body was brought to Kohat today."

He said the three others had been transported to a divisional headquarters hospital.

Romanian ambassador extends Eid-ul-Azha greetings to Pakistan

APP

ISLAMABAD: Romanian Ambassador to Pakistan Dan Stoenescu, on the occasion of 'Eid-ul-Azha' has extended his warmest greetings and heartfelt felicitations to the people of Pakistan.

In a special message, the Ambassador reflected on the values of devotion, selflessness, and generosity that define this significant celebration.

"Eid-ul-Azha is a time to reflect on values of devotion, selflessness, and generosity," Ambassador Stoenescu said. "It is a celebration that brings families and communities together—marked by acts of kindness, the sharing of meals, and the spirit of unity."

The Ambassador wished all those observing Eid-ul-Azha a joyful and peaceful celebration, expressing his hope that this occasion would bring happiness, prosperity, and harmony to families and communities across Pakistan.

"Eid Mubarak from all of us at the Embassy of Romania in Islamabad, Pakistan," the Ambassador's message concluded, highlighting the spirit of friendship and goodwill between Romania and Pakistan.

Pakistan has a very strong leadership; it is what it is: Trump

US president says he's proud that nobody else could have stopped Indo-Pak tension

MONITORING DESK

WASHINGTON: United States President Donald Trump has once again praised the leadership of Pakistan, highlighting its role in maintaining regional stability.

During a joint press conference with German Chancellor Friedrich Merz at the White House, the US president credited Pakistani leaders for their cooperation in de-escalating tensions with India and preventing a potentially catastrophic conflict. Recalling his role as a mediator and engagements with both Pakistani and Indian leadership during the heightened tensions and skirmishes between the two countries, Trump said: "I spoke to some very talented people on both sides ... and I said, you know, we're dealing with you on trade, Pakistan and India right now. I said we're not going to deal with you on trade if you're going to go shooting each other and whipping out nuclear weapons that maybe even affect us."

"Because you know that nuclear dust

blows across oceans very quickly, it affects us. "And I said if you're going to do that, we're not going to do any trade deals, and you know what, I got that war stopped."

"Whether anyone likes it or not, the fact is that Pakistan's leadership is great," the US president remarked. He went on to claim, "And they stopped the war. Now will they give me credit? They won't give me credit for anything. But nobody else could have stopped it. I was proud of that." He noted that averting the conflict between the two South Asian nuclear-armed neighbours was a significant diplomatic achievement that underscored the importance of global mediation in conflict zones. He recalled how the tensions were "getting close to being out of hand", prompting him to step in and personally engage with the leaders of both nations to de-escalate the situation. He mentioned that both countries were "well represented" during discussions, saying, "The leader of India, a big guy, was here a few weeks ago and we had great talks — and Pakistan, likewise."

Salik reiterates govt's support for Palestinian people

INP

ISLAMABAD: Minister for overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development Chaudhry Salik Hussain has reiterated support of the government and people of Pakistan for the Palestinian people.

The support was extended at an event titled 'International Solidarity Meeting with the Palestinian Labor and people' organized under the auspices of Arab Labor organization at Geneva, said a press release.

Hussain strongly condemned the atrocities and use of force against the unarmed civilians including children, women and elderly people in Gaza.

He urged the global community to provide immediate financial, medical, and food assistance to the people of Palestine.

The minister also demanded for immediate action by the United Nations and ILO to stop the massacre and restoration of normal civic life.

The meeting was also attended by ministers and senior dignitaries of ILO member states in large number.

Minister for Labour Palestine Dr. Anas Atari along with senior leadership of Arab states, Director General ILO and Secretary-General of International Trade Union Confederation also attended the meeting. They also condemned the genocide of Palestinian people including children and women.

Meanwhile, Minister for overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development also held a meeting with Secretary-General of International Trade Union Confederation, Luc Triangle in Geneva. The Minister emphasized Pakistan's commitment to international labor standards and the country's efforts under the Decent Work Country Program, aiming to improve labor conditions in line with UN SDGs. He also emphasized Pakistan's focus on strengthening protections for migrant workers and enhancing social protection systems.

Eid-ul-Azha celebrated partially in Khyber District

INP

PESHAWAR: Khyber District's Bara region witnessed divided Eid celebrations once again as nearly 30 percent of the local population observed Eidul Adha on Friday in line with Saudi Arabia.

The rest of the population plans to celebrate the festival tomorrow (on Saturday), as per the official announcement by Pakistan's central Ruet-e-Hilal Committee.

According to the report, hundreds of worshippers offered Eid prayers in Bara on Friday. After the prayers, people returned to their homes to fulfil the Sunnat-e-Ibrahimi—the ritual animal sacrifice performed in remembrance of Prophet Hazrat Ibrahim's (AS) obedience to God.

In the days leading up to Eidul Adha, Muslims prepare by cleaning their homes, buying new clothes, and arranging festive meals.

On the first day of Eid, those who are financially able sacrifice an animal—commonly a goat, cow, sheep, or camel—and distribute a portion of the meat to those in need.

Kundi demands FIR against Gandapur over alleged torture of PPP workers

NEWS DESK

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Faisal Karim Kundi on Friday called for an FIR to be registered against Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur, accusing him of involvement in the alleged torture of Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) workers.

Speaking to the media, Kundi had criticised the KP chief minister, stating: "Those who talk about Riyasat-e-Madinah are providing shelter to thieves. None of the ministers, officers or the chief minister himself have been held accountable for their involvement in malpractice."

He further claimed: "Scandals involving billions of rupees have surfaced. It's as if Ali Baba and the forty thieves are ruling KP."

Separately, CM Gandapur launched a scathing attack on the federal government and state institutions, accusing them of destroying Pakistan's economy, undermining the Constitution, and pushing the country toward authoritarianism. Addressing the media in Rawalpindi on Thursday, Gandapur criticized the ruling elite for taking turns in power and leaving the country in economic ruins. "They have destroyed the country and the economy by taking turns," he said. "Now they've amended laws to wipe out what little was left of the Constitution."

President Greet Nation on Eid-ul-Azha, Calls For Promoting values of Sacrifice, Love, Unity

APP

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari has extended his heartfelt congratulations to the entire Pakistani nation and the Muslim Ummah around the world on the occasion of Eid-ul-Azha, emphasizing the importance of promoting values of sacrifice, love, brotherhood, and unity in our behavior.

"This day revives in us the spirit of faith, sacrifice, selflessness, and brotherhood. I pray that Allah Almighty makes this day a source of blessings, unity, and prosperity for our country and the entire Muslim Ummah. Ameen," the president said in a message.

He said Eid-ul-Azha commemorates the unparalleled obedience, sacrifice, and submission of Prophet Ibrahim (AS) and Prophet Ismail (AS).

"These great personalities set a shining example of devotion, loyalty, selflessness, and sacrifice by wholeheartedly submitting to the command of Allah Almighty. This day reminds us that no sacrifice is too great in seeking the pleasure of Allah, and that our indi-

vidual and collective success lies in obedience to His will," he added.

He also called for drawing lessons from the spirit of sacrifice and selflessness shown by Prophet Ibrahim (AS) and integrate them into our lives.

Today, there is a pressing need to support the underprivileged and marginalized segments of our society. Along with the act of animal sacrifice, Eid calls upon us to make a solemn pledge to always care for those in need—whether they are poor, sick, or destitute.

"As a nation, we must support each other, share in each other's sorrows, and work together to build a prosperous and great Pakistan," President Zardari said.

On this occasion, the entire Pakistani nation must reaffirm its commitment to rid our hearts of hatred and prejudice, and with sincerity, contribute to the progress of our country and the elevation of the Muslim Ummah.

May Allah accept our sacrifices, grant Pakistan peace, progress, and prosperity, and bless us with the strength to become a united and strong nation. Ameen, the president added.



Quetta: Justice Rozi Khan Bareech was officially sworn in as the Acting Chief Justice of the Balochistan High Court during a solemn oath-taking ceremony held at the Governor House Quetta. The oath was administered by Governor Balochistan Jaffar Khan Mandokhail.

PTI still popular, urges formation of opposition alliance

INP

JHELUM: Former Federal Minister Fawad Chaudhry has reiterated that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) remains the most popular political party in the country, despite recent challenges.

Speaking to a private TV channel he said that the Sambrial election result is evident proof that PTI's popularity remains undiminished, adding that political tides naturally fluctuate over time.

Chaudhry emphasized that the public's vote continues to be for PTI founder Imran Khan, not just the party label. He expressed skepticism that the sentence in the £190 million case against Khan would be suspended, suggesting legal

hurdles still remain.

He revealed that he had met the PTI founder three times in recent days. During these meetings, Imran Khan advised the party to pursue the formation of an opposition alliance. However, Fawad admitted that PTI's inexperience was a key reason behind the failure to bring such an alliance to fruition. He also noted that Khan has directed Senator Shibli Faraz regarding the party's future political strategy and emphasized that the country must move toward stability.

Fawad also raised concerns that Senator Ijaz Chaudhry was issued production orders but has not been allowed to speak in parliament.

Pakistan's Minister for Crypto and Blockchain, Bilal Bin Saqib, Engages Dozens of U.S. Government Officials

PRESS RELEASE

Washington, D.C., USA: The Minister of State for Crypto and Blockchain, Pakistan, Bilal Bin Saqib met with over a dozen key U.S. government officials and lawmakers to strengthen cooperation in the areas of digital assets, blockchain regulation, and financial innovation.

The Minister met with Senator Cynthia Lummis, co-author of the Lummis-Gillibrand Responsible Financial Innovation Act and co-sponsor of the BITCOIN Act, which seeks to designate Bitcoin as a strategic reserve asset. Senator Lummis has been a leading advocate for thoughtful and comprehensive crypto legislation in the U.S.

He also met with Senator Bill Hagerty, a member of the Senate Banking Committee and supporter of a pro-innovation regulatory environment, and with Senator Rick Scott, who has consistently emphasized economic security and financial stability. Additionally, he also met with Senator Tim Sheehy and Senator Jim Justice, the latter also a co-sponsor of the BITCOIN Act and a strong supporter of blockchain applications in government and infrastructure.

Meetings also included Senator Ted Cruz, Congressman Troy Downing, a

member of the House Financial Services Subcommittee on Digital Assets, Congressman Ryan Zinke, Congressman Rick McCormick, and Congressman Derrick Van Orden — all of whom are actively engaged in shaping policy frameworks related to emerging technologies. Ms. Jill Kelley, founder of blockchain identity platform EdentID, participated in discussions alongside Congressman McCormick, bringing perspectives from the private tech sector. He also met with White House Associate Counsel Kevin Cline and Associate Counsel Ugonna Eze of the White House Counsel's Office. "We came to learn, to listen, and to contribute," said Minister Bilal. "Pakistan is actively studying how global leaders are approaching regulation, innovation, and financial inclusion — not to copy, but to adapt the best ideas for our own unique landscape."

The visit also served to share Pakistan's own initiatives — including the recent announcement of its Strategic Bitcoin Reserve, efforts to build a virtual asset regulatory framework, and the use of stablecoins to improve remittances and expand financial access.

The exchanges highlighted the need for closer global coordination and the role emerging markets like Pakistan can play in shaping the next chapter of the digital economy.



Chairman Senate, Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani addresses to media persons during press conference, in Multan .