

# DAILY MIRROR

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## White House says US negotiators in contact with Iran, Trump warns Tehran to sign nuke deal

Trump meets with oil executives as Iran stalemate drags on, shipping traffic through Hormuz remains low amid stalled US-Iran talks

### MONITORING DESK

WASHINGTON: The White House has said negotiators are continuing to engage with the Iranians, who, it claimed, are "struggling to sort out their leadership situation" amid the war, Al Jazeera reports.

In a statement to US media, spokesperson Anna Kelly said Trump would only enter into an agreement with Iran that "puts US national security first".

The White House's statement comes after Trump threatened Iran on social media to "get smart soon" and sign a deal on nuclear issues.

US President Donald Trump has urged

Iran "to get smart" and sign a deal on the nuclear issues. In a Truth Social post, he wrote, "Iran can't get their act together. They don't know how to sign a non-nuclear deal. They better get smart soon!"

Trump also shared an AI-generated image of him holding a rifle in his hand, with explosions taking place in the background, and a caption saying, "No more Mr Nice Guy".

Meanwhile, commercial shipping traffic has remained low around the Strait of Hormuz over the past 24 hours, as talks between the US and Iran remained stalled, with only 10 vessels passing through the waterway.

Anadolu reports. Six vessels passed through the Strait from the Arabian Gulf to the Oman Gulf, while four traversed from east to west.

US President Donald Trump and his top officials met with oil and gas executives, including Chevron CEO Mike Wirth, at the White House yesterday to discuss the energy fallout of the Iran war and other topics, Reuters quotes an Axios report as saying.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs the meeting of the Federal Cabinet.

## Pakistan pursuing efforts for peace between US, Iran: PM

### APP

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has said Pakistan is consistently pursuing diplomatic efforts for peace between the US and Iran.

He was chairing the federal cabinet meeting in Islamabad today.

The Prime Minister took the cabinet into confidence on Pakistan's diplomatic efforts that led to Islamabad talks between the US and Iran. He especially mentioned the efforts of Chief of Defence Forces and Chief of Army Staff Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir and Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar in this regard.

He also alluded to the recent visit of Iranian Foreign Minister to Pakistan.

The Prime Minister mentioned that Pakistan was heading towards growth trajectory after achieving macro level stability.

He, however, said the US-Iran war impacted our collective efforts of two years. He expressed the resolve to work collectively to come out of all the

challenges.

He emphasized that only those nations succeed who emerge from challenging situation with unity, hardwork and firm resolve.

Shehbaz Sharif said our austerity and conservation measures are continuing. He noted that our fuel consumption has dropped significantly as compared to previous weeks. He expressed satisfaction over the availability and supply of petroleum products in the country.

Referring to the subsidies provided by the provincial governments in the current situation, the Prime Minister said they will be requested to continue with them. He said the commitment made by the federal and provincial governments with the public will be continued.

The Prime Minister said Pakistan has repaid the bilateral loan of 3.50 billion dollars, expressing satisfaction that the foreign exchange reserves are at the same level despite this payment. He expressed his gratitude to the Saudi leadership for extending support to Pakistan.

## CDA records to be digitized within 120 days: Naqvi

### INP

ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi has directed that all Capital Development Authority (CDA) records be fully digitized within 120 days, allowing citizens to track the status of their applications online.

Naqvi chaired a high-level meeting to review ongoing public projects and new development initiatives in the federal capital. He emphasized that no illegal housing societies will be permitted to operate in Islamabad.

The meeting also covered the pre-qualification of three international firms for the construction of a new convention center, expo center, and Islamabad Arena, with instructions to complete the projects ahead of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) summit.

Land has been allocated for a service center in F-6, and construction on recreational projects—including a top golf facility, hot air balloon rides, zip line, water park, and amusement park—will commence soon to provide modern leisure options for residents.

The minister stressed the development of a modern sports complex and directed plans to transform F-9 Park into a high-standard recreational space similar to Hyde Park. A comprehensive plan for entertainment facilities around Shahdara Dam was also requested.

Beautification and lighting work on Expressway and Club Road will start immediately.

## Armed forces destroy Afghan Taliban posts, vehicles in Chaman sector: Security Sources

### INP

RAWALPINDI: Pakistan Armed Forces have destroyed several Afghan Taliban posts and vehicles in Balochistan's Chaman sector, security sources said on Wednesday.

The operations, part of the ongoing "Operation Ghazab lillah", were a response to the "unprovoked aggression" by Afghan Taliban forces and terrorists on the Pak-Afghan border, according to the sources.

Security sources said that the army destroyed several Afghan Taliban posts and vehicles in Chaman "with precision". "The Pakistan Army's effective operations have forced the Afghan Taliban and the Fitna al Khawarij to retreat".

Fitna al Khawarij is a term the state uses for terrorists belonging to the banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP).

"Security forces' unwavering resolve to defend the homeland is ensuring the country's territorial integrity," sources added. The sources also stated that the operations will continue until "all set targets are achieved".

Security forces also destroyed multiple Afghan Taliban posts in the Chaman sector on Tuesday, according to security sources.

On Sunday, the forces destroyed the gun positions of Afghan Taliban involved in unprovoked firing at civilians in South Waziristan. Security sources said that the posts were destroyed after the Afghan Taliban fired at civilians and left three people, including two women, injured. Due to a resurgence of militancy, especially in KP and Balochistan, where attacks often target security personnel and LEAs, the state has intensified counter-terrorism operations.



Peoples Party Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari Condoles with MNA Mir Aijaz Hussain Jakhri on the Death of His Son Zaid Hussain Jakhri.

## President invites greater Chinese investment in priority sectors

### APP

Sanya, Hainan, China: President Asif Ali Zardari on Wednesday met CEO of Hangzhou Jinjiang Group Wang Jian, and encouraged the company to expand its footprint in Pakistan, particularly in energy, industrial and agricultural sectors.

During the meeting, the president was briefed that the group is already engaged in multiple projects in Pakistan and ranks among the top 100 business groups in China, with operations spanning heavy industry, fertiliser, oil and gas, coal gasification, renewable energy, agriculture and irrigation.

The president noted that Pakistan is actively encouraging foreign investment

in various sectors, especially water treatment, electric vehicle battery systems and alternate energy. He emphasised that such partnerships could support sustainable growth and industrial development.

He further stated that the Government of Sindh would extend all possible facilitation to foreign companies seeking to invest in the province, particularly under public-private partnership frameworks.

The meeting was attended by Senator Saleem Mandviwalla, Sharjeel Inam Memon, Senior Provincial Minister, Sindh, Syed Qasim Naveed Qamar, Special Assistant to the Chief Minister of Sindh for Investment and Public-Private Partnership Projects and Chief Secretary, Sindh.



SANYA (China): President Asif Ali Zardari held a meeting with the chief executive officer (CEO) of Hangzhou Jinjiang Group, Wang Jian, in Sanya.

## Timely completion of development projects top priority: Balochistan Secretary

### APP

QUETTA: Balochistan's Secretary for Communications and Works, Babar Khan, has emphasized that the timely completion of ongoing development projects across the province is the government's foremost priority, warning that negligence will not be tolerated.

He made these remarks while presiding over a review meeting that assessed progress on various schemes based on reports from Deputy Commissioners, Planning and Development, and Monitoring and Evaluation departments. The session was attended virtually by chief engineers, superintending engineers, and district engineering officers from all six zones of the province.

During the meeting, district officers provided detailed briefings on incomplete projects, outlining progress, financial

challenges, and technical obstacles.

Babar Khan acknowledged that ensuring timely completion remains a major challenge but stressed that effective utilization of available resources can help achieve this goal. He directed officials to accelerate work and avoid unnecessary delays, making it clear that officers found guilty of negligence or inefficiency would face strict disciplinary action.

He further announced that contractors failing to deliver on projects would face blacklisting and legal proceedings. "The government is committed to completing public welfare projects within the stipulated timeframe and will take all possible measures to achieve this," Khan asserted.

The meeting underscored the administration's resolve to strengthen accountability and ensure that development schemes directly benefit the people of Balochistan.

## Pakistan warns Hormuz blockade threatens regional stability, global economy

Envoy Asim Iftikhar addresses UN Security Council: Says recent US-Iran talks reflected Pakistan's peace efforts: Raises concerns over Gaza, the West Bank and Lebanon

### NEWS DESK

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has warned that any blockade of the Strait of Hormuz is affecting the economies of countries around the world, including Pakistan, as it called for urgent steps to restore stability in the Middle East, on Wednesday.

Speaking at a meeting of the United Nations Security Council, Pakistan's envoy Asim Iftikhar said recent talks between the United States and Iran in Islamabad were evidence of Pakistan's commitment to peace.

He said the situation in the Middle East remained grave and unstable, adding that the central cause of unrest in the region was the unresolved Palestine issue.

The Pakistani envoy said that despite a ceasefire in Gaza, more than 800 Palestinians had been killed in Israeli attacks. He called for the second phase of the Gaza peace plan to be completed without delay. Pakistani envoy Asim Iftikhar also expressed concern over settler violence in the West Bank and the expansion of illegal settlements.

Asim Iftikhar urged an immediate end to incursions at Al-Aqsa Mosque and what he described as violations of sacred

places.

He said the end of Israeli occupation and the establishment of a two-state solution remained the only path to lasting peace in the region. Turning to Lebanon, he said more than 2,000 civilians had been killed or injured in Israeli military actions there. Pakistan is implementing economic reforms under a \$7 billion International Monetary Fund (IMF) program and has been attempting to stabilize inflation, strengthen foreign exchange reserves and improve external accounts after years of economic turmoil.

Ahmad said Pakistan, like many developing countries, was directly affected by disruption in the Strait of Hormuz, linking those risks to Islamabad's recent diplomatic outreach aimed at reducing regional tensions.

"Like many developing countries from the region and beyond, Pakistan is concerned and is directly impacted by the closure of Strait of Hormuz," Ahmad said.

"Pakistan, supported by our partners and brotherly countries, including China, Saudi Arabia, Turkiye, Egypt, and others, has spearheaded constructive diplomatic efforts for de-escalation and broader pursuit of stability between the United States and

Iran."

Pakistan has in recent weeks positioned itself as a facilitator between the two sides following conflict and a fragile ceasefire that heightened fears of a broader regional war and disruptions to global energy flows.

Ahmad also warned that disruptions to maritime traffic carried serious implications for global commerce and international stability. "Any disruptions to the routine traffic at sea gravely impact international trade with negative repercussions for global economy and breed volatility that imperils international peace and security," he said.

The envoy stressed the importance of safeguarding international maritime law and maintaining open sea lanes, warning that continued instability could erode confidence in the global rules-based order.

"If this crisis persists, the first order impacts, that is the issues related to the procurement of oil and gas and essential commodities such as the fertilizers and their pricing trends will increasingly translate into second and third order impacts on inflation, on growth, current account, and balance of payment issues," Ahmad said.

## PM for safe railway travel, robust freight services to boost economy

### APP

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday directed Pakistan Railways to ensure public convenience and safe rail travel across its network, and to make railway freight services more effective and robust to boost economic activity.

The prime minister, in a meeting with Federal Minister for Railways Mohammad Hanif Abbasi, who called on him here, expressed satisfaction over the recent steps taken by Pakistan Railways to improve facilities for passengers.

Besides discussing the ongoing development projects, the minister briefed the prime minister on the ministry's operational matters and the progress of various initiatives to improve infrastructure.

They also exchanged views on other matters of mutual interest.

## President signs off on contentious transfer of 3 IHC judges

### INP

ISLAMABAD: Acting President of Pakistan Yusuf Raza Gilani on Wednesday approved the transfers of three judges from the Islamabad High Court on the prime minister's advice.

According to a notification issued by the Ministry of Law, "In exercise of the powers conferred under clause (1) of Article 200 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, on the recommendation of the Judicial Commission of Pakistan (JCP), the President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan is pleased to transfer Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kayani to Lahore High Court, Justice Babar Sattar to Peshawar High Court, and Justice Saman Rafat Imitiaz to High Court of Sindh."

A day earlier, the JCP held a series of meetings to consider the transfer of high court judges, with deliberations conducted under the chairmanship of Chief Justice of Pakistan Yahya Afridi.

"The meetings were convened by the secretary of the Judicial Commission of Pakistan in exercise of powers conferred by clause (22) of Article 175A of the Constitution, as the Chairman of the Commission, while giving reason therefor, declined to convene the meeting on the requisition by one third of the total members," it said.

## Shahid Khaqan Abbasi calls fuel pricing policy 'completely wrong'

### INP

KARACHI: Awam Pakistan Party central convener Shahid Khaqan Abbasi on Wednesday criticised the government's petroleum pricing policy, calling it "completely wrong", while highlighting Karachi's infrastructure challenges and governance issues in Sindh.

Addressing a press conference in Karachi alongside former finance minister Miftah Ismail and other party leaders, he said, "The government's policy on petroleum product prices is completely wrong," adding that current policies were directly affecting the public.

On April 24, the government jacked up prices of both high-speed diesel (HSD) and petrol by Rs26.77 per litre despite no increase being required in the rates of petrol. The government imposed a nearly Rs27 per litre additional tax on the fuel to push its price higher.

Petroleum Minister Ali Pervaiz Malik said in a statement that oil prices were increasing once again in the global market due to regional tensions.

"Due to the pressure of rising oil prices and agreements with global partners, the government is having to take steps to transfer the burden of increasing oil prices.

The new petroleum levy rate on petrol has been fixed at Rs107.4 per litre, as PM Shehbaz again chose to recover the tax meant to be recovered from diesel consumers from petrol consumers, a policy that he had earlier implemented and then reversed after public backlash.

Abbasi stated that the government appeared "powerless" and urged it to revise its policies to address public concerns.

"Why is the government not focusing on resolving people's problems?" he asked. He said, "It is important to discuss Karachi's issues because if Karachi develops, Pakistan will develop," he said.

He added that during his tenure, Ismail had approved funding for projects such as the Green Line and K-IV water scheme for Sindh. He said that under the National Finance Commission (NFC) award, provinces receive substantial funds, rejecting the notion that the federal government does not provide adequate financial resources.

**Pakistan, Nepal move to deepen cultural alliance with renewed focus on Buddhist heritage and regional harmony**

APP

ISLAMABAD: In a renewed push to turn shared history into active diplomacy, Rita Dhital, Ambassador of Nepal to Pakistan, and Aurangzeb Khan Khichi, Federal Minister for National Heritage and Culture on Wednesday reaffirmed their commitment to expanding cultural cooperation, signaling a stronger people-centric dimension in Pakistan-Nepal relations.

Welcoming the Ambassador, the Federal Minister emphasized that Pakistan strongly believes in fostering people-to-people contacts as a cornerstone of diplomatic relations.

He underlined the importance of cooperation between the cultural institutions of Pakistan and Nepal, particularly in the fields of music, arts, artifacts, and other cultural initiatives.

The Minister reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to strengthening cultural ties with Nepal in line with the Prime Minister's vision of promoting cooperation with friendly countries. He noted that

such partnerships play a vital role in preserving shared heritage and advancing mutual understanding among nations.

Highlighting Pakistan's rich Buddhist heritage, the Minister stated that the government has directed renewed efforts to showcase Buddhist civilization as part of its broader policy to promote religious tourism.

He observed that Pakistan is home to invaluable Buddhist artifacts, including the renowned fasting Buddha sculptures, and remains dedicated to preserving and promoting this legacy.

He further invited the Ambassador to visit the Department of Archaeology and Museums, an institution working under the Ministry and serving as a hub of cultural artifacts, particularly those connected to Buddhist heritage.

During the meeting, the Nepalese Ambassador acknowledged the longstanding relationship between Nepal and Pakistan, built on mutual respect, goodwill, and cooperation.



QUETTA: Baloch Students Organization central Chairman Bohar Sale Baloch along with National Party Secretary General Senator Kabir Muhammad addressing a press conference.

**Pakistan, Tajikistan agree to advance trade, transit Cooperation, explore new Corridor mechanisms**

APP

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan on Tuesday held a meeting with Tajikistan Ambassador, Sharifzoda Yusuf Toir to discuss measures for enhancing bilateral trade, strengthening transit connectivity, and deepening institutional cooperation between Pakistan and Tajikistan.

The Federal Minister for Commerce emphasized that Pakistan was committed to facilitating regional trade through improved logistics, diversified transit routes, and closer coordination with partner countries, said a release issued here on Wednesday.

He noted that timely completion

of internal procedures under transit frameworks, including QTTA arrangements, was essential to operationalize existing mechanisms and move forward on future cooperation.

The Minister underlined the importance of developing an integrated commercial corridor, stating that establishment of logistics hubs, offloading facilities, and multimodal transport systems would help create an efficient logistics chain linking Pakistan with Central Asia.

He added that enhanced cooperation with China would remain central to strengthening regional connectivity.

He stressed that reliance on a single route was not viable and reiterated the need to keep multiple corri-

dors operational to ensure continuity and resilience of trade.

He observed that cost and efficiency considerations must guide the selection of transit routes.

He further highlighted the need to strengthen institutional linkages by facilitating direct interaction between export and import agencies of both countries through virtual meetings to initiate sector-specific cooperation and prepare draft memoranda of understanding (MoUs).

The Minister also noted the role of Trading Corporation of Pakistan in government-to-government trade, adding that such mechanisms could be utilized for key commodities while supporting private sector participation.

**Six Pakistanis arrested in Saudi Arabia over violation of Hajj regulations**

INP

MAKKAH: Authorities in Saudi Arabia have arrested six Pakistani nationals for violation of Hajj regulations head of this year's pilgrimage.

Reports indicated that one individual was detained for staying in Makkah without a valid Hajj permit, while five others were arrested for allegedly assisting pilgrims without proper authorization.

Security has been tightened in Saudi Arabia, and current rules allow entry and accommodation in Makkah only for those holding a Hajj visa. Individuals on tourist or other temporary visas after April 18 are considered in violation.

The Saudi Ministry of Interior has warned that breaches of Hajj permit rules can result in fines ranging from 20,000 to 100,000 Saudi riyals.

Previously, individuals on Umrah visas were instructed to leave the country by April 18.

Facing fines, six months' imprisonment, and deportation if they remained. Providing accommodation or other support to those without a Hajj permit can also incur penalties up to 100,000 riyals.

**CM Maryam Nawaz Meets Oscar-Winning Filmmaker Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy, Agrees on Punjab Film City Collaboration**

By Maqsood Khalid

LAHORE: Academy Award (Oscar)-winning Pakistani-origin filmmaker and journalist Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy called on Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif today. The chief minister appreciated Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy's professional achievements and expertise, and termed her efforts in highlighting social issues through documentary filmmaking as commendable. During the meeting, Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy praised Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif for her contributions to arts and culture. Both sides discussed the Punjab Film City project in NSIT City and agreed on mutual collaboration. The chief minister said the Punjab Film City project would become Pakistan's first "end-to-end" media production hub. She added that the project would provide facilities for film, television, digital media, VFX, and post-production.

She further stated that Punjab Film City would include modern studios, sound stages, post-production labs, shooting locations, and a lake. A convention hall, media trade hub, and film and music school are also part of the project. CM Maryam Nawaz Sharif also directed the Parks and Horticulture Authority (PHA) to restore the Digital History Museum at Minar-e-Pakistan. Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy said that the chief minister is doing commendable work and described her leadership as exemplary, adding that people of Karachi also acknowledge her efforts. She noted that the revival of the Basant Festival after decades is a result of the chief minister's.

**Terrorist killed as attack on Bannu police post thwarted**

INP

BANNU: A terrorist was killed early Wednesday when Bannu police repelled an attack on the Mazanga police post, officials said.

Police officials said heavily armed terrorists attacked the post in the early hours of Wednesday, but personnel responded promptly and foiled the assault.

An intense exchange of fire between police and the attackers continued for some time, leaving one terrorist dead and several others injured.

The wounded attackers were taken away by their accomplices under the cover of darkness.

Following the incident, Bannu District Police Officer (DPO) Yasir Afridi, along with Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) Arshad Khan and teams from the Rapid Response Force and Quick Response Force.

**KP CM says PTI founder imprisoned without reason**

INP

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Sohail Afridi has said that the founding leader of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf is being kept in jail without any justification, adding that his ideology cannot be confined.

Addressing the inauguration ceremony of the "Senator of Excellence," Sohail Afridi stated that the founding PTI leader's eyesight has been affected up to 85 percent.

He further said that he is not being

allowed meetings with his legal team and family members.

The Chief Minister said that the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government is working to translate the founder's vision into practice, while spending on the public remains the top priority.

He added that various steps are being taken to equip the youth of the province with skills.

He also stated that outdated curricula are being removed from educational institutions, and investment in youth remains the government's mission.



QUETTA: Daily wage workers is resting on the side of the road due to lack of work.



**Babar gifts returning fans century as Zalmi thrash United to make final**

By Maqsood Khalid

KARACHI: The floor shook at the National Bank Stadium here on Tues-day night as fans returned to the stands for the first time since the commencement of the 11th edition of the HBL Pakistan Super League last month.

The seismic activity, however, intensified each time Babar Azam arrived at the striker's end. The "Babar, Babar" chants reverberated across the venue mightily each time the bowler ran towards the crowd's favourite player.

Each time Babar's bat met the ball, that clap of the willow merged into the consequent, deafening cheers. And when that hit turned into a boundary, 32,000 fans turned raucous.

Deprived of attending PSL matches owing to the government's austerity measures all season until they were allowed to do so for the playoffs, the fans wanted a gift and Babar gave them one.

The Peshawar Zalmi skipper added the fireworks to the festive night, hitting a blistering century to lead his side to the PSL final after a 70-run win over a hapless Islamabad United in the Qualifier.

The right-hander hit 103 off 59, smashing 12 fours and four sixes as Zalmi made their fifth PSL final with the hope of winning their first title after their 2017 crown.

Babar's masterclass began from the very first over. Facing pacer Richard Gleeson, he caressed a straight drive for two, punched a boundary through midwicket with authority, and guided another single.

The tone was set. In the second over, he sliced a short ball aerially over backward point and unfurled a majestic swivel pull that raced to the midwicket boundary.

A flick off the pads over midwicket for six in the third over showcased his class, taking him to 22 off just 12 balls.

Mohammad Haris provided explosive support at the other end, hammering Imad Wasim for a monstrous six over cow corner and sweeping boundaries with audacity. The opening stand raced to 72 in a little more than six overs before Haris (35 off 16) holed out to long-off Shadab Khan. Zalmi were 80-1, already looking ominous on a flat pitch. Kusal Mendis joined Babar and the pair added 84 runs in quick time. Mendis, aggressive as ever, dealt in boundaries, including a delightful ramp over the keeper off Faheem Ashraf.

Babar, meanwhile, eased into his groove. He brought up his half-century off 40 balls with a boundary off Imad in the 11th over, a moment greeted with thunderous applause.

The partnership flourished until the 15th over when Mendis (41 off 26) miscued a pull off Faheem and was caught at midwicket.

Disaster struck immediately. Sha-dab (3-42), bowling with venom, clai-m-ed Michael Bracewell and Abdul Samad in consecutive deliveries — a hat-trick ball that Aaron Hardie survived.

Zalmi suddenly wobbled at 165-4 in the 16th over, with Babar on 79. But the captain refused to yield.

Off Faheem, he slashed a boundary past backward point, drove another straight over the bowler's head, and punched through covers to move into the nervous nineties. The crowd sensed history. In the 17th over, facing Gleeson, Babar got under a fuller delivery outside off and flayed it over covers. Then, on the fifth ball, he met a pace-off delivery in the slot, presented the full face of the bat and muscled it straight down the ground for six.



GREECE'S Stefanos Tsitsipas hits a return against Casper Ruud of Norway during their Madrid Open round-of-16 match at Park Manzanares.

**Sinner queries schedule, surges into Madrid Open quarters**

SPORTS DESK

MADRID: Jannik Sinner suggested the Madrid Open organisers should reconsider their tournament scheduling to avoid late-night finishes like the one Rafael Nadal experienced in the third round.

In a rare 11:00 am start on Tuesday, Sinner moved past British 19th seed Cameron Norrie 6-2, 7-5 to reach the quarter-finals. He explained he was put on first on Manolo Santana Stadium so that Nadal, his potential next opponent, would be scheduled in the afternoon to give the Spaniard time to recover from his three-set win over Joao Fonseca that ended at 1:00 am on Monday morning.

"It's quite unusual for me," Sinner told Tennis TV about his early kick-off.

"I don't know the last time I played at 11. But for me it doesn't matter what time. I try to do my best. There was a question if it would be me or Nadal to play at 4. But I think it's right he plays at 4, because he finished very, very late."

"But at the same time, I feel like we need to make some adjustments to the scheduling of the day. Two matches (starting) from 8pm is very late."

"Even though you have one day in between. But still it's very, very late."

"You finish at 1:30am, and you need to eat, you need to have treatment, so it's very late. But we try to adapt ourselves, our bodies, our minds, so from my side it was a good performance today."

In his first-ever meeting with Norrie, Sinner won 81 percent of his first-serve points, and 63 percent of the points behind his second delivery on his way to notching a 25th consecutive victory at the Masters 1000 level.

Sinner, who is bidding to reach the semi-finals for the first time in the Spanish capital, will next face 19-year-old Jodar in what will be a highly-anticipated last-eight show-

down. The Italian world number one is just the second man in series history to win his first 20 Masters 1000 matches of the season, joining Novak Djokovic, who achieved that feat twice, in 2011 and 2015.

Later in the day, Jodar's dream run on home soil continued with a convincing 7-5, 6-0 thumping of world number 66 Vit Kopriva.

The Madrid-born wildcard advanced to the biggest quarter-final of his young career, and improved to 12-1 on clay so far this season.

Casper Ruud fought back from the brink to keep his title defence alive with a 6-7(4/7), 7-6(7/2), 7-6(7/3) victory over former finalist Stefanos Tsitsipas.

In a high-quality three-hour contest, Tsitsipas led 5-3 in the decider, holding two match points, and served for the victory at 5-4, but Ruud, who was 0/11 in break points up until then, found a way to take down the Greek's serve and went on to clinch the tie-break.

Last week's Barcelona champion Arthur Fils advanced to the quarter-finals at the Caja Magica with a 6-3, 6-4 win over Argentine 25th seed Tomas Martin Etcheverry.

Fils has made the quarter-finals in six of the seven tournaments he has contested so far in 2026.

The Frenchman will take on Jiri Lehecka, who beat sixth-seeded Italian Lorenzo Musetti 6-3, 6-3, for a place in the last four.

In WTA action, ninth-seeded Mirra Andreeva gave herself an early birthday gift, defeating Canadian Leylah Fernandez 7-6(7/1), 6-3 to reach her first Madrid semi-final.

The Russian teenager, who turns 19 on Wednesday, awaits defending champion Aryna Sabalenka or American Hailey Baptiste. A recent champion in Linz, Andreeva improved her clay-court record to 11-1 this season.

**Sri Lanka govt 'temporarily' takes over cricket board**

SPORTS DESK

The Sri Lankan government took control of the island's cricket board on Wednesday and appointed a nine-member interim administration to carry out "structural reforms".

Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) is the country's wealthiest sporting body, but it has been plagued by allegations of corruption and mismanagement.

World governing body International Cricket Council (ICC) suspended Sri Lanka for two months in 2023-2024, citing political interference in the running of the national board.

"All administrative functions of Sri Lanka Cricket will be temporarily brought under the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, effective today," the ministry said.

Shortly afterwards, the ministry appointed former investment banker and opposition politician Eran Wickramaratne to lead the board.

Among the other members appointed by the government are former skipper Kumar Sangakkara and former Test players Sidath Wettimuny and Roshan Mahanama.

The ministry said the interim committee will "address the current issues in cricket and implement structural reforms".

Four-time SLC president Shammi Silva resigned on Tuesday, along with his entire committee, after the government intervened.

AFP has contacted the ICC for comment.

Sri Lanka made an early exit from the T20 World Cup, which it co-hosted with India in February-March this year.



Sri Lankan players celebrate taking a wicket during the Twenty20 International tri-series match against Pakistan at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium.

Member APNS

## Daily Mirror

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## Growth to stability

**THE State Bank's decision to raise its key policy rate by 100 basis points to 11.5pc signals a shift in priorities from supporting growth to protecting macroeconomic stability, preserving exchange rate confidence, and preventing inflation from becoming entrenched amid risks arising from the Gulf crisis.**

Coming at a time when inflationary pressures are re-emerging and external vulnerabilities intensifying, the move reflects the assessment that risks to stability now outweigh gains from monetary easing. The decision also reveals a growing recognition of the trade-off between growth and stability. Headline inflation rose to 7.3pc in March, while core inflation edged up to 7.8pc, and is expected to stay above the medium-term target range of 5-7pc for much of the next fiscal as higher global oil prices feed into domestic costs.

"Inflation was projected to increase up to the upper bound of the target range even before the onset of the Middle East conflict, mainly due to adverse base effects," the monetary policy noted. In this context, the SBP governor said the rate hike was a "pre-emptive move" to contain second-round effects before they became entrenched. Policy tightening, therefore, aims to prevent current price pressures from spilling into core inflation, particularly through higher transport and production costs, which can lead to broader price increases.

The Middle East war has drastically complicated our macroeconomic outlook. Elevated energy prices, rising freight charges and higher insurance premiums are putting pressure on an import-dependent economy exposed to external shocks. The SBP has rightly concluded that ignoring these risks could endanger our still fragile economic stability. Its stress on protecting exchange rate confidence is significant, given our history of imported inflation spirals triggered by currency weakness. This is where the growth-versus-stability trade-off is most evident.

Higher borrowing costs will dampen the investment appetite, slow credit expansion and weigh on sectors already sensitive to interest rate movements such as manufacturing and construction. However, allowing inflation expectations to become unanchored would inflict far greater damage on long-term growth prospects. The external account offers some reassurance, but not enough to justify complacency.

Remittances remain the principal anchor of stability, financing both the current account and more than 100pc of the trade imbalance. Foreign exchange reserves have also improved aided by external financing inflows and debt rollovers. Still, these buffers remain vulnerable to prolonged geopolitical shock, particularly if oil prices stay elevated for an extended period.

By Ghazan Jamal

## Addressing the fault lines

**WHILE the world is fixated, rightly so, on the war in the Gulf, another conflict closer to home is largely going unnoticed. True, the level of devastation in the hostilities between Pakistan and Afghanistan is nowhere near that in Iran. But, in many ways, it is a far more perplexing conflict. Given the long-standing animosity pitting Iran against the US and Israel, President Donald Trump's exit from the nuclear weapons agreement in his first term, and US military build-up near Iran weeks before the attack, the American-Israeli strike, say experts, was a matter of 'when' and not 'if'. On the other hand, the 2021 Taliban takeover in Afghanistan was celebrated as a success of two decades of Pakistan's covert foreign policy. Yet, just a few years later, heavy fighting between the two has broken out. This is surprising given that, historically, the Pakistani state has perceived the threat along its western border from communist and nationalist groups, not religious movements.**

Since independence, the state has had a complicated relationship with nationalist groups in the smaller provinces and has largely been suspicious of them. Given that the main Pakhtun nationalist party at the time of independence, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan's Khudai Khidmatgar, campaigned against KP (then NWFP) joining Pakistan, advocating instead for the creation of Pakhtunistan, it is not difficult to see where this scepticism comes from. However, since then, Pakhtun nationalist groups, including Ghaffar Khan's own party, have moved towards advocating for more autonomy within the larger federal structure than seeking a separate homeland. Even so, in the early years, separatist murmurs within these movements continued, if not amongst the leadership, then definitely among some supporters.

Against this backdrop, the state saw an opportunity in the Soviet-Afghan war to support religiously motivated militant groups in KP, not only to bolster jihad efforts in Afghanistan, but also to weaken nationalist voices at home. After the

Soviet exit from Afghanistan, these groups continued to serve a purpose both as an important foreign policy tool to ensure a Pakistan-friendly government in Afghanistan and to undermine regional nationalist voices in KP. After the US invasion of Afghanistan, covert support from the state to the Afghan Taliban continued. In fact, many Pakistani leaders lauded the Taliban takeover of Kabul in late 2021, proclaiming that the Afghans had 'broken the shackles of slavery'.

But ironically, instead of the stabilising effect security experts in Pakistan had hoped for, insecurity in KP increased exponentially. According to the South Asia Terrorism Portal, 118 people (civilians and security forces) were killed in 2020 in acts of terrorism in KP. In 2025, the number of casualties had risen to 723 — an increase of over 500 per cent. Rather than being pro-Pakistan that Islamabad had hoped for, the new Afghan Taliban regime has been a greater threat to Pakistan's security than any other previous Afghan regime. In the last three years, Pakistan has reportedly bombed targets in Kabul more than once, and numerous border skirmishes have taken place. The border crossings between the two countries have lately remained closed. The movement that was envisioned to unify the country and secure its western border, has now become a challenge to national cohesion here.

Since independence, the state has had a complicated relationship with nationalist groups in the smaller provinces.

In the meantime, the Pakhtun nationalist movement has been fractured into numerous political and apolitical societal groups, but almost all of them are striving for more rights and autonomy within the Pakistani federation. Regrettably, the benefits of accepting these goals on their own merit may be lost on the state, even though many of them share a common purpose: to bring peace and stability to Pakhtun hinterlands. While the government will have to take the lead role in restoring peace, local support is fundamental in the fight against terrorism. Unfortunately, the brunt of the negative consequences of the policy

to influence affairs inside Afghanistan has been borne by Pakhtun society. This has resulted in a significant trust deficit between KP's population and the state. There also appears to be no discernible effort or policy to rebuild trust.

At the same time, Pakhtun nationalist sentiments, which transcend political parties, have become very strong, especially among the youth. Arguably, an overwhelming majority of the new generation of Pakhtun youth have turned towards their ethnic identity and roots to explain their society's current struggles as well as formulate solutions. The state should reach out to such nationalist communities and bodies. By engaging with their concerns and ideas, it can help win back the public and unite them against extremist militants. In the longer term, undoing decades of societal degradation resulting from support for extremist groups in the Pakhtun belt, will take even more engagement with the locals. Reversal of jihadi indoctrination that began in the 1970s will require promoting platforms to counteract this and curriculum reforms.

It is important for the centre to develop cultural sensitivity about minority ethnic groups. For example, ill-conceived media campaigns, such as the 'acha ji' advertisement, forget that there are twice as many Pakistani Pakhtuns than Afghan Pakhtuns. Hence, promoting negative stereotypes of the latter is not only offensive to a large part of Pakistan's population but also damaging to national unity. The flawed notion that a homogenous Pakistani identity can be imposed on a diverse population should be jettisoned. History is replete with examples of disastrous consequences when countries repress ethnic identities or prefer some over others. The prudent way is to embrace Pakistan's diversity and strengthen it. Government messaging and policymaking should make clear that Pakistan nationalism is multicultural. Genuine efforts to engage with Pakhtuns including nationalists can prove to be a key first step towards addressing the country's ethnic fault lines. It is integral to winning back the trust of the local population in the fight against militancy.

By Shahzad Sharjeel

## Hafez & Hormuz

**THE 'Hafez' in this piece refers to none other than the oracle of Shiraz. The region is in the throes of war. Pakistan has positioned itself as a mediator and peacemaker. India is being criticised at home for ceding the role of regional stabiliser to a country it considers out of its league.**

Congress MP Shashi Tharoor, who was sent around the world to present the Indian case after Operation Sindoor, has been particularly scathing in his criticism of the BJP government. What the opposition, civil society and non-Godi media portray as ambivalence is actually the logical course of action for a government that has unambiguously allied itself with the murderous and genocidal Israeli regime. During his visit to Jerusalem, Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed the Knesset, saying that Israel was the fatherland and India the motherland of the two peoples.

In all fairness, India and the UAE can decide what is best for their people and which course to take in their international relations. At our end, we need not get too excited about our newfound stardom and 'utility'. The price we will pay for the role we have assumed should not be difficult to predict; the down payment is telling and embarrassing in equal measure. We have become favourites of the world's most derided leader, Donald Trump, whom we earlier proposed for the Nobel Peace Prize. Trump is largely responsible for the Gaza genocide. He attacked Iran on the false pretext of attempting to acquire weapons of mass destruction and has underwritten the hell let loose on Lebanon by Israel.

Who gets the Nobel Peace Prize should concern us far less than what's in it for us, especially in the long run. Will energy prices ever return to levels before the Israeli-US attack on Iran? Will loans and foreign-exchange safe-deposits into the State Bank ever translate into investment in our manufacturing sector? If and when that happens, will the investment windfall ever reach the citizens, or will they continue to be dominated by the security mantra?

Divination steers both weddings and wars.

North and south India, despite their distinct historical identities, have absorbed enough of each other's cultures to make it incumbent upon South Asians to host a range of initiatives to restore peace in the Persian Gulf. As Audrey Truschke notes in her seminal work, *India: 5,000 Years of History* on the Subcontinent, in Shiraz, 2,400 kilometres west of Delhi, Hafez was reading Ameer Khusrau in the 14th century. A 1355 copy of Khusrau's *Khamsa*, a collection of five narrative poems, handwritten by Hafez, survives to date. Of late, Manu S. Pillai has written extensively on the Hindu-Muslim syncretic history of south India and on how both the Muslim Bahmani sultanate and the Hindu Vijayanagara empire used Persian as the court language, employed officials and soldiers from the opposing camp, and competed to lure talent from the faraway Persian, Arab and African regions. Bahmani Sultan Muhammad II, who ruled the Deccan between 1378 and 1397, invited Hafez to his capital, Gulbarga. Hafez set out on the journey but changed his mind at the port

of Hormuz and sent the sultan a poem explaining that he could not bring himself to leave the glades, wines and the friends he loved for the riches the sultan offered.

The region is caught in the flames of war. Divination, the seeking of metaphysical omens, is among the oldest traditions in the Neo-Assyrian-Greek region. The subcontinent is no different. So entre-n-ched is the practice that not only auspicious dates for nuptials but also graver matters like war call for seeking divine signs, even if only to justify and legitimise them as religious duties rather than to set their course. No wonder a cabinet member is called a minister and a mantri in the Indo-European languages. This interplay of languages is a subject for another day, but suffice it to say that most cabinets and war councils around the world have nothing more than incantations to fall back on. One very common way of seeking divination is to randomly open the anthology of Hafez, seek guidance from the first line on the page, and interpret the rest of the poem for a detailed prediction. This method of drawing divination is called faal in Persian and Urdu/Hindi. Keeping in view what we all have on our minds, I drew a digital faal from a Diwan-i-Hafez portal; it threw up ghazal 41, its first two, and the last couplet, when combined, roughly mean: 'Though the wine is joyous, the wind is fragrant/ Desist merriment; the cop is stringent/ This earth and sky are no more than a bleeding sieve/ That sifts and sorts kingly crowns and courts/ Invaded are the Persian and Iraqi ports/ It is now the turn of the Baghdad and Tabrizi forts.'

# DAILY MIRROR

## Pakistan-EU cooperation vital for innovation-driven, sustainable growth: Musadik Malik

APP

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination Musadik Malik on Wednesday said that enhanced cooperation between Pakistan and the European Union was essential to drive innovation-led, sustainable economic growth and long-term wealth creation.

Addressing the Pakistan-EU Business Forum 2026, the minister underscored that partnerships between Pakistan and Europe were not only vital for trade but also for fostering an "innovation ecology" capable of delivering sustained productivity and shared prosperity.

He said that while short-term productivity could be achieved through technology, long-term and sustainable growth depended on building strong systems of innovation. "At the heart of wealth creation lies productivity, but sustainable productivity only comes from a system of innovation," he remarked.

Highlighting the significance of Pakistan's ties with Europe, the minister said the EU remained one of Pakistan's largest trading partners and a key source of knowledge, innovation and institutional strength. He appreciated the role of EU Ambassador Androulla Kaminara and European diplomats in strengthening bilateral relations.

Musadik Malik noted that forums like the Pakistan-EU Business Forum

played a critical role in bringing together businesses, technologies and ideas, enabling the exchange of tacit knowledge and fostering new business models. "When cultures and technologies meet, new ways of thinking emerge, and innovative ideas find their place in global value chains," he added.

Emphasizing sustainability as a cornerstone of future growth, the minister said unchecked exploitation of resources could lead to short-lived economic gains, whereas responsible and balanced use of resources ensured long-term prosperity. He termed Europe a global leader in climate responsibility and environmental governance.

Referring to evolving EU regulatory frameworks such as the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) and green policies, he said these measures posed both challenges and opportunities for Pakistan. However, he welcomed the European Union's commitment to support Pakistani businesses, particularly small and medium enterprises (SMEs), in meeting these standards.

He noted that the EU's financial support, including a €20 million framework, would help Pakistani SMEs undertake carbon audits, adopt green certifications, and enhance innovation capacity. "This demonstrates that our partners are not only setting standards but also enabling us to meet them," he observed.

The minister said such initiatives could lead to the emergence of new indus-

trial clusters and innovation-driven businesses, drawing parallels with countries like Finland, which transformed its economy through strong environmental standards and innovation ecosystems.

Highlighting Pakistan's vulnerability to climate change, Musadik Malik said the country had faced devastating impacts including loss of lives, injuries, displacement of millions, and disruption of education. He stressed that these challenges also presented opportunities for innovation.

"Any solution developed to address Pakistan's complex climate challenges has the potential to become a globally exportable model," he said, adding that collaboration with international partners could help transform local solutions into global success stories. He also highlighted the importance of youth and SMEs in driving future economic transformation, noting that emerging global trends such as artificial intelligence, electrification, biotechnology and nanotechnology were reshaping economies worldwide.

The minister appreciated the Forum's focus on SMEs and youth engagement, terming it a "great beginning" for building partnerships that could unlock new avenues of growth and innovation. Concluding his remarks, Musadik Malik reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to strengthening ties with the European Union and welcomed international partners to invest, collaborate and contribute to a sustainable and innovation-driven future.



QUETTA: Governor Balochistan Jaffar Khan Mandokhel in a meeting with Parliament Secretary Prince Umar Ahmedzai.

### Green line bus service expanded to Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan cardiac institute

APP

QUETTA: Acting on the directives of Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti, the provincial transport department has officially launched the Green Line Bus Service to the Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan Institute of Cardiology.

The initiative aims to provide citizens with safe, reliable, and affordable travel facilities, particularly easing access for patients and their attendants.

According to the transport department spokesperson, the service will operate daily from 7:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m., with buses departing every 45 minutes to minimize waiting times. The route covers several key locations across Quetta, including BA Mall, FC Hospital, Nawar Killi, Zarghoonabad, Haji Manan, Labour Colony, Abdul Khalik Chowk, Christian Colony, Highway Mart, Maleezai, Nasran, NUST, and SMBZAN Institute of Cardiology.

Officials emphasized that the project's primary goal is to ensure timely and comfortable access to the cardiac institute for patients and their families. They added that the provincial government is prioritizing public welfare projects and will continue to improve the urban transport system in the future.

The launch of the Green Line Bus Service has been welcomed as a significant step toward enhancing public mobility and strengthening healthcare accessibility in Quetta.

### Ahsan calls for unified, science-driven strategy to ensure national water security

APP

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal on Wednesday outlined a comprehensive, multi-pronged national strategy to tackle Pakistan's growing water crisis, urging a unified, science-based approach to ensure long-term water security.

Addressing a Round Table Consultation on National Water Security under "Uraan Pakistan," the minister said the country's water challenge was no longer limited to scarcity but also stemmed from persistent mismanagement.

"Sometimes we face extreme shortage and at other times destructive floods, therefore, water management is as critical as water availability," he remarked.

Calling for a shift beyond "traditional statements," Ahsan stressed the need for a national consensus on water conservation and a cohesive water security policy.

"This challenge cannot be solved in silos, whether between federation and provinces, sectors or regions. It has now become a matter of national security," he said, warning that external pressures, including attempts to use water as a strategic tool, had further heightened vulnerabilities.

The minister emphasized that Pakistan's response must be "national, united, scientific and future-proof,"

identifying key pillars of a multi-dimensional strategy.

Highlighting limited storage capacity as a major concern, he mentioned that Pakistan could store water for only around 90 days, far below global benchmarks.

He called for a national agreement on expanding water reservoirs through large, medium and small dams, recharge and delay-action dams, floodwater reservoirs,

hill torrent management and urban rainwater harvesting. "New water reserves should be seen as the foundation of national survival, not political debate," he added.

On water use efficiency, Ahsan pointed out that agriculture consumed the bulk of water

but with low productivity due to outdated irrigation practices.

He proposed a national water efficiency and conservation mission, including modernization of irrigation systems, laser land leveling, drip and sprinkler technologies, digital irrigation, wastewater recycling and transparent water accounting.

"We must adopt the principle of more value per drop," he said, linking water use reforms with crop patterns, subsidies and pricing policies.

The minister also flagged the unchecked exploitation of groundwater, describing it as a "silent lifeline" under threat.

### Khalid Hussain Magsi calls on PM Shehbaz Sharif

INP

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Science and Technology and President Balochistan Awami Party Khalid Hussain Magsi on Wednesday called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

During the meeting, Khalid Hussain Magsi briefed the prime minister on matters related to the ministry, including ongoing development projects. Other issues of mutual interest were also discussed, according to a statement issued by the PM House.

### Hajj Review Committee briefed on facilities for pilgrims in Makkah, Madina

INP

ISLAMABAD: A meeting of the Hajj Review Committee was held under the chairmanship of Federal Minister for Religious Affairs, Sardar Muhammad Yousuf, where officials of the Ministry of Religious Affairs briefed the participants on arrangements for pilgrims.

The officials informed the committee that five dispensaries have so far been established in Makkah in accordance with the number of Hajj pilgrims, while five bus stands have been allocated for Haram transport.

Secretary for Religious Affairs Abrar Ahmed Mirza, Additional Secretary Dr. Sajid Mahmood Chohan, and Joint Secretary Hajj Muhammad Bakhsh Sangi gave detailed briefings during the meeting.

Chief Coordinator Makkah Dr Mirza Ali Mehsud, Coordinator Makkah Zulfikar Khan, and Hajj Directors from Makkah and Madinah also participated in the meeting via Zoom from Makkah.

Addressing the meeting, the federal minister urged officials to remain vigilant throughout the Hajj operation and ensure that pilgrims' problems are addressed immediately. He also emphasized that pilgrims should follow rules and regulations during their stay in Saudi Arabia and uphold the dignity of their homeland. Director Madina informed the committee that more than 20,000 pilgrims had reached Madina till Tuesday. He added that over 11,000 pilgrims have completed their pilgrimage to Riyad-ul-Jannah.

### SSGC organizes open court to address gas related issues of public in Quetta

APP

Quetta: An open court was organized on Wednesday at Quetta office under the auspices of Sui Southern Gas Company (SSGC) to address gas related issues of public.

The aim of the open court was to provide quick and effective solutions to gas-related issues being faced by consumers and to strengthen communication between the public and the institution.

The open court was attended by Billing In-charge Haji Naseer Ahmed Lehri, Chief Engineer Imran Sahib, Zonal Manager Tahir Achakzai, Focal Person Saifullah Rind, Recovery Officer Muhammad Awad Bazai and CRD Sohail Ahmed Mengal.

A large number of citizens participated on the occasion and presented their problems such as overbilling, lack of gas pressure, new connections and other technical complaints.

The officers listened carefully to the

problems of the citizens and issued orders to resolve several complaints on the spot, while some complex matters were transferred to the relevant departments for immediate action.

Speaking on the occasion, Zonal Manager Tahir Achakzai said that SSGC is striving to provide the best facilities to the consumers and holding open courts is a link in this chain so that the problems of the public can be heard and resolved directly.

Billing In-charge Haji Naseer Ahmed Lehri said that the billing problems being faced by the consumers are being resolved on priority basis and no injustice would be allowed to be done to anyone.

He urged the consumers to ensure timely payment of their bills so that it could help in improving the system.

Citizens appreciated the holding of open courts and hoped that such measures would resolve their problems soon and further increase confidence in the institution.

### Govt. targets 60% fiberization in three years: Shaza Fatima

APP

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication Shaza Fatima Khawaja on Wednesday said the government aims to raise fiberization to nearly 60 percent within the next three years.

Speaking at the EU-Pakistan Business Forum 2026, she said, "Only 16 percent of our towers are fiberized at this point. Our target is that in the next three years, we will increase that to almost 60 percent." She said Pakistan is also working to significantly expand fiber connectivity at the household level, increasing fiberized home passes from around 2-3 million to at least 10 million within the next two years.

She said these targets form part of Pakistan's broader national fiberization strategy aimed at strengthening connectivity, expanding broadband access, and enabling digital transformation across sectors.

The minister said the government, under the direction of the Prime Minister, has removed Right of Way (RoW) charges to facilitate fiber deployment across the country. She said the policy shift is designed to make fiberization

more attractive for private sector investment and accelerate infrastructure rollout.

"This has made fiberization business-friendly and investment-ready, allowing the private sector to take a leading role," she said. She added that improving digital connectivity is a core priority under the government's vision of "Digital Nation Pakistan."

Highlighting progress in international connectivity, Shaza Fatima said Pakistan has successfully landed two to three submarine internet cables. She said two of these are expected to become operational within the current year, while another will be activated next year.

She said these developments will significantly improve Pakistan's global internet bandwidth and connectivity resilience.

The minister also said Pakistan has signed agreements with Central Asian countries aimed at positioning the country as a regional data transit hub.

She said Pakistan has already operationalized data transit routes from China to Karachi through the national fiber backbone, while alternative connectivity routes are being developed via Central Asia and the Wakhan Corridor, strengthening regional digital integration.

### Ayaz pays tribute to martyrs on Youm-e-Shuhada

APP

ISLAMABAD: Speaker of National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq Wednesday paid rich tribute to the martyrs who laid down their lives for the defence, security and stability of the country, saying that the entire nation salutes its brave sons who rendered the country's defence impregnable through their supreme sacrifices.

In his message on the occasion of Youm-e-Shuhada, the Speaker said that Pakistan's martyrs had demonstrated unparalleled courage, resolve and commitment in the fight against terrorism, extremism and external threats.

He said that owing to the collective sacrifices of the armed forces, law enforcement agencies and citizens, the nefarious designs of anti-state elements had been effectively thwarted, resulting in the restoration of peace in the country.



ISLAMABAD : Federal Minister for Culture and National Heritage, Aurangzeb Khan Khichi present a traditional cultural shawl to Nepal's Ambassador to Pakistan Rita Dhital as a gesture of goodwill .

### Aleem Khan, Hanif Abbasi discuss inter-ministerial cooperation

APP

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Communications Abdul Aleem Khan Wednesday visited the Ministry of Railways and held a detailed meeting with Federal Minister for Railways Muhammad Hanif Abbasi to discuss matters of mutual interest and inter-ministerial cooperation.

Upon his arrival, Hanif Abbasi warmly received Abdul Aleem Khan at the ministry, said a news release.

During the meeting, both ministers exchanged views on enhancing cooperation between the railways and communications sectors, with a focus on improving the country's transport infrastructure and introducing reforms for better public

service delivery.

The two leaders also discussed measures aimed at providing safer, more efficient and convenient travel facilities to the people. Abdul Aleem appreciated the reforms and initiatives being undertaken in Pakistan Railways, describing them as important steps toward modernization and better governance.

They reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening institutional coordination and close liaison between their ministries to accelerate progress in the transport sector.

The meeting also included an exchange of views on the overall political and economic situation of the country, as well as Pakistan's growing importance and role in the global context.

### Pakistan, Russia chart expanded cultural partnership with focus on arts, film and heritage

APP

ISLAMABAD: Cultural diplomacy between Pakistan and Russia moved a step closer to a broader canvas on Wednesday, as Ambassador of the Russian Federation, Albert P. Khorev, met Federal Minister for National Heritage and Culture Division, Aurangzeb Khan Khichi, with both sides outlining an ambitious road-map for deepening artistic and people-to-people engagement.

During the meeting, Aurangzeb Khan Khichi appreciated the longstanding cultural ties between the two countries and underscored the importance of strengthening people-to-people connections through art, music, film, and heritage initiatives.

The Minister stated that Russian musicians, artists, and dancers had been invited to Pakistan to showcase their artistic talent and cultural traditions.

He highlighted that Pakistan's premier cultural institutions, including Lok Virsa and the Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA), provide strong platforms to host and promote Russian cultural activities in the country.

Mr Khichi further emphasized that, once the pending Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) is finalized—following the anticipated visit of the Prime Minister—both countries would be in a

stronger position to organize joint exhibitions, art displays, and painting showcases to celebrate Pak-Russia cultural relations.

He also noted that, under the directions of the Prime Minister, Pakistan is actively organizing cultural weeks with friendly countries, aimed at fostering international understanding and cultural diplomacy.

Ambassador Albert P. Khorev extended an invitation to the Federal Minister to attend Russia's National Day celebrations to be held in Islamabad.

He also shared that the Niftysphere Institute of Arts and Design will present Russian costumes as part of the cultural showcase during the event.

The Ambassador praised the efforts of the Advisor to the Federal Minister for Cultural Affairs, Mr Usman Shah, who was also present during the meeting, acknowledging his active role in promoting stronger cultural ties on behalf of the Ministry.

During the discussion, Ambassador Albert Khorev expressed a strong interest in expanding cultural collaboration between Pakistan and Russia.

In this regard, he highlighted that several Russian films have already been produced and dubbed into Urdu, and proposed organizing special screening sessions in Pakistan.



QUETTA: Olsi Committee Yaroo residents hold protest outside QPC.