

Gilgit-Baltistan heading for coalition Government

ISLAMABAD, June 8 (PTI)

PAKISTAN-OCCUPIED Kashmir's Gilgit-Baltistan region was poised for a coalition Government as none of the parties could win a majority in the so-called Legislative Assembly elections, according to media reports on Monday. President Asif Ali Zardari's Pakistan Peoples Party has secured nine seats, followed by Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) with six seats. Five Independent candidates have won the polls, Geo News reported, citing unofficial results.

Jailed former premier Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party was ahead in two seats, while their ally, the Majlis Wahdat-i-Muslimeen, was leading in one, Dawn reported.

The so-called Assembly has a total of 33 seats -- 24 of which are contested through direct elections, which were held on Sunday, while another eight are reserved for women, technocrats and professionals. India has lodged a strong protest with Pakistan over the elections to the so-called Gilgit-Baltistan assembly, maintaining that the region is Indian territory that has been "illegally and forcibly" occupied. India reiterated its well-known position that the entire Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh, including the so-called 'Gilgit-Baltistan' are integral and inalienable parts of India as a result of "complete, legal and irrevocable accession" of Jammu and Kashmir to India in 1947.

India 5th largest military spender in world in 2025: SIPRI

STOCKHOLM, June 8 (PTI)

INDIA was the fifth largest military spender in the world, with an expenditure of ~~USD~~ 92.1 billion in 2025, according to a report by an international think-tank, which also mentioned the “unusually severe military crisis” that erupted between India and Pakistan last year.

In its annual assessment report launched on Monday, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) also said that India has approximately 190 nuclear warheads as of January 2026, compared to Pakistan’s estimated stockpile of 170.

“Key findings of SIPRI Yearbook 2026 are that states are increasingly relying on nuclear weapons as instruments of national power -- reversing decades of efforts to reduce the numbers and role of nuclear weapons -- even as the risks of miscalculation and escalation are rising,” SIPRI said in a statement.

The Stockholm-based think-tank said India is believed to have once again “slightly expanded its nuclear arsenal” in 2025 and continued development of new types of nuclear delivery systems.

“The modernisation programme is increasingly focused on developing long-range weapons capable of reaching targets throughout China, although planning also continues to be focused on India’s long-standing rivalry with Pakistan,” it said.

SIPRI further said, “Pakistan continued to develop new delivery systems and accumulate fissile material in 2025, suggesting that its nuclear arsenal might expand over the coming decade”.

“The brief armed conflict between India and Pakistan in May 2025 saw India attacking Pakistani air and missile bases that are likely to have nuclear-related roles, but both sides took steps to avoid escalation,” it added.

This edition of the SIPRI Yearbook coincides with the 60th anniversary of its founding in 1966.

Xi, Kim express hopes for greater China, N Korea ties

SEOUL, June 8 (AP)

CHINESE President Xi Jinping and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un underscored their commitment to deepen cooperation in a closely watched summit on Monday, as Xi made a rare visit to Pyongyang in a likely attempt to reassert Beijing's unique influence over its socialist neighbour.

It's Xi's first visit to North Korea in seven years. Earlier Monday, he was given a lavish welcome upon arrival at Pyongyang's international airport. He and his wife Peng Liyuan were greeted by Kim and his wife Ri Sol Ju, who broadly smiled and clapped.

Xi later arrived at Pyongyang's main square, where a military honour guard and thousands of people, including children carrying balloons and hopping, staged a welcoming ceremony. Buildings surrounding the plaza were draped in the two countries' flags, giant portraits of Kim and Xi and red-and-yellow ban-



ners welcoming the Chinese leader and celebrating the nations' "friendship and unity."

In a summit later on Monday, Xi expressed China's willingness to expand cooperation in a wide range of areas including trade, agriculture, construction and technology, China's state broadcaster CCTV said in an online report. Xi said the two countries should strengthen strategic cooperation and firmly safeguard their respective sovereignty and security interests, according to the report. Kim said Xi's visit "clearly demonstrates how unbreakable" the North Korean-China relationship is, CCTV said.

Israel and Iran trade strikes, threatening to drag region back to full-scale war

■ By Jon Gambrell
DUBAI, June 8 (AP)

THE Iranian military's joint command said on Monday it was halting its offensive operations, after Israel and Iran exchanged fire in their first attacks since the US struck a ceasefire with Tehran two months ago.

The renewed hostilities threatened to drag the Middle East back into a full-scale war.

Officials have been unable to turn the April ceasefire into a deal to permanently end the conflict.

During the truce, Iran has maintained its stranglehold on the Strait of Hormuz - a crucial passage for the world's oil and natural gas whose closure was



Israeli security forces examine a fragment of an intercepted Iranian missile in northern Israel, on early Monday. (AP/PTI)

the primary reason global fuel prices skyrocketed. Israel has continued to strike Hezbollah, Iran's ally in Lebanon, and pushed deeper into that coun-

try. And on Monday, Yemen's Houthi rebels, another Iranian ally, fired at Israel and warned they would target Israel-affiliated ships in the Red Sea.

India asks its nationals in Israel, Iran to be vigilant

TEL AVIV/DUBAI, June 8 (PTI)

INDIA on Monday asked its nationals in Israel and Iran to exercise utmost caution, stay vigilant and avoid all unnecessary travel to these countries. "In view of the latest developments in the region, the Embassy reiterates its earlier advice to all Indian Nationals to avoid any travel to Iran," the Embassy of India in Iran said in a post on X.

Gallantry Awards: President confers 7 Kirti Chakras

7 Kirti Chakras-2 posthumously; 15 Vir Chakras-3 posthumously; and 29 Shaurya Chakras-one posthumously conferred

NEW DELHI, June 8 (PTI)

PRESIDENT Droupadi Murmu on Monday conferred seven Kirti Chakras, including two posthumously, to personnel of the armed forces displaying raw courage, unparalleled bravery and total disregard for personal safety in the line of duty.

Air Commodore Prasanth Balakrishnan Nair, an IAF pilot and a Gaganyatri, is also among the recipients of the Kirti Chakra, India's second-highest peacetime gallantry award.

Murmu conferred seven Kirti Chakras, including two posthumously; 15 Vir Chakras, including three posthumously; and 29 Shaurya Chakras, including one posthumously, to the personnel of the defence forces, Central Armed Police Forces and State



President Droupadi Murmu confers the Kirti Chakra to Group Captain Prasanth Balakrishnan Nair, Flying (Pilot), at Rashtrapati Bhavan. (ANI)



President confers the Kirti Chakra to Captain Lalrinawma Sailo, 4 Para (Special Forces), at Rashtrapati Bhavan on Monday. (ANI)

Police Territory police forces during phase-I of the Defence Investiture Ceremony hosted at the Rashtrapati Bhavan, the Defence Ministry said. Lt Commander Dilna K and Lt Commander Roopa A of the Navy are among the Shaurya Chakras recipients. The President presented the gallantry award to them for exemplary endurance, bravery and devotion to duty in Navika Sagar Parikrama II. Lt Commander Roopa A, along with Lt Commander Dilna K, sailed over 25,600 nautical miles through the Indian, Pacific, Atlantic and Southern Oceans. "While navigating through the perilous Drake Passage in stormy conditions that caused the boat to heel severely, regaining control required exceptional skill and

extraordinary courage. During the expedition, they also became the first Indians to reach Point Nemo, the oceanic Pole of Inaccessibility, by sailboat," reads the citation in a post on X by the Rashtrapati Bhavan.

Lance Naik Meenatchi Sundarama of Rashtriya Rifles, Naib Subedar Doleshwar Subba of Para (Special Forces), Major Arshdeep Singh of Assam Rifles and Captain Lalrinawma Sailo of Para (Special Forces) have also been conferred the Kirti Chakra, according to the list of awardees shared by the Government.

Sepoy Janjal Pravin Prabhakar of the Mahar Regiment of Rashtriya Rifles and Lt Shashank Tiwari of the Sikkim Scouts have been conferred the Kirti Chakra posthumously.

The Rashtrapati Bhavan, in a

series of posts on X, also shared some photos of the ceremony along with citations.

"President Droupadi Murmu presents the Shaurya Chakra to Major Anshul Baltoo, The Jammu and Kashmir Light Infantry, 32 Assam Rifles, for displaying bravery in the line of duty. In April 2025, during a combing and search operation in Dima Hasao, South Assam, he confronted an armed cadre at close quarters and single-handedly neutralised him. The operation resulted in the elimination of three armed cadres and the recovery of weapons and war-like stores," it said.

Another post said, President presents the Shaurya Chakra to Major Leishangthem Deepak Singh, 11 Para (Special Forces), for his exceptional bravery.

Oil prices surge as Iran conflict flares; global stocks skid

■ By Yuri Kageyama
TOKYO, June 8 (AP)

GLOBAL shares sank on Monday after Wall Street ended last week with its worst day since October, while oil prices jumped more than \$4 as fighting flared between Israel and Iran.

South Korea's Kospi led the global retreat, plunging 8.3% on heavy selling of technology shares and extending losses that on Friday gave the S&P 500 its biggest single day drop in months.

The future for the S&P 500 was up 0.2%, while that for the Dow Jones Industrial Average lost 0.3%.

Oil prices surged as Israel launched airstrikes early Monday, targeting central and western Iran in response to missile fire. Brent crude, the international standard, jumped \$4.60 to \$97.69 a barrel. Benchmark US crude surged \$4.13 to \$94.67 a barrel.



Armenian PM Nikol Pashinyan claims victory in general election

YEREVAN, June 8 (AP)

ARMENIAN Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan early on Monday claimed victory in the country's general election, as preliminary results showed his governing Civil Contract party came first with 49.81% of the vote.

According to Armenia's Central Election Commission, four parties polled above the 4% electoral threshold and will enter Parliament following Sunday's election, including some that are vocally pro-Russia.



Pashinyan and the governing Civil Contract party are looking for a strong mandate for a new geopolitical course for Armenia, including distancing the country from Moscow and seeking to join the European Union.

According to the election commission, the Strong Armenia bloc was the runner-up with 23.29% of the vote. It is led by Samvel Karapetyan, a billionaire who made his fortune in Russia and is under house arrest for allegedly advocating for the government's overthrow. He has

rejected the charge as politically motivated.

PM MODI CONGRATULATES: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday congratulated Armenian leader Nikol Pashinyan on the victory of his Civil Contract Party in the country's parliamentary elections.

"Congratulations to Mr. Nikol Pashinyan on the impressive victory in the parliamentary elections. Renewed mandate reflects the enduring trust and confidence of the people of Armenia in your leadership and vision. I look forward to working closely with you," Modi posted on X.