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Pakistan possesses vast export potential; ideal geographic location: PM Shehbaz

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday approved to modernise the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan to boost country's exports, enhance the access of local products to global markets, and align local industries, including Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), with export standards. The prime minister, chairing a high-level meeting, said that a modernised TDAP would pave the way for achieving access to global markets for manufactured industrial products with a view to boosting exports.

He directed that a complete ecosystem, including the entire value chain, be established for agricultural product exports and that highly trained human resources be inducted in the Authority through a transparent, merit-based process.

Calling for linking professional growth to performance and target achievement, he directed the hiring of a reputable private audit firm to conduct performance and financial audits of the Authority.

The prime minister said that Pakistan possessed vast export potential and an ideal geographic location and that the incumbent government was facilitating industries and SMEs to fully capitalise on these advantages to increase exports.

During the meeting, the officials briefed the prime minister on the authority's existing setup and key challenges. A comparative analysis of effective international Trade Promotion Organisations (TPOs) was presented, demonstrating how modern institutions provide integrated services for local market development, global market access, exporter capacity building, and trade expansion.

A comprehensive reform package was presented to transform TDAP into a world-class trade promotion organisation responsive to modern needs. The proposals include streamlining the authority's mandate to eight core functions, restructuring the board and management, optimising the regional network, adopting digital platforms and Artificial Intelligence (AI), and implementing measurable performance indicators alongside independent third-party evaluations.

A phased 12-month implementation roadmap comprising approval, design, execution, and independent assessment was also submitted.



RAWALPINDI: Sudan's Interior Minister Lieutenant General (Police) Babiker Samra Mustafa Ali shakes hand with Chief of Defence Forces (CDF) and Chief of the Army Staff Field Marshal Asim Munir at GHQ



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a review meeting regarding promotion of cashless economy.

Governor for technology-driven higher education in Balochistan

QUETTA, (VoM Report): Balochistan Governor Jaffar Khan Mandokhail has called for a transformation of higher education policies, stressing that universities must equip young people with practical and technology-driven skills alongside conventional academic qualifications to help them secure opportunities in the rapidly evolving global economy.

According to an official statement outlining the governor's educational priorities for 2026, Mandokhail has consistently encouraged public-sector universities to expand programmes in emerging fields, including artificial intelligence (AI), robotics, digital literacy, software development and e-commerce.

He observed that dependence on conventional government employment could not adequately address the growing employment needs of the province's young population.

He therefore stressed closer integration between university education, practical training and the skills demanded by emerging industries.

The governor also underscored the expanding role of digital platforms in creating economic opportunities, saying young people could use online businesses and international digital marketplaces to generate income and reach customers beyond their local communities.

He further called for the introduction of modern training programmes in medical and other professional fields, while advocating stronger coordination between universities, technology-related institutions and government departments to improve graduates' employability.



QUETTA: Chief Justice of Balochistan High Court Justice Kamran Khan Malakhail in a group photo with Senior Lawyers during farewell party in honour of Supreme Court Senior Judge Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail organized by the Staff of Supreme Court Quetta Branch Registry.

Balochistan govt pursuing broad development agenda: Zahoor Buledi

TURBAT: Balochistan Planning and Development Minister Mir Zahoor Ahmed Buledi has highlighted a series of government measures in education, healthcare, employment and infrastructure, saying 14,500 teachers have been recruited while a Rs16 billion youth development programme has been introduced to create greater economic opportunities for young people.

Speaking at the "Gand-o-Nand" programme arranged by the Turbat Press Club, Buledi said the provincial government was pursuing a broad development agenda focused on improving public services and promoting economic activity through investment in education, healthcare, agriculture and infrastructure.

He said the recruitment of subject specialists in chemistry, physics, biology and English was part of efforts to raise the standard of education in the province. According to the minister, measures were also being taken to improve healthcare services and strengthen existing medical facilities.

Detailing the youth programme, Buledi said the Rs16 billion initiative would offer vocational training, business financing and employment opportunities.

He added that around 30,000 young people would be trained in skills aimed at increasing their prospects of securing employment abroad.

Turning to development in Kech, the minister announced approval for a cardiac catheterization laboratory in the district, describing it as an important addition to local healthcare services. He also said several development schemes in his constituency were approaching completion.

Buledi said the launch of the Green Bus Service in Turbat would provide a more affordable transport facility, particularly benefiting low- and middle-income sections of the population. He also referred to a model village project intended to improve basic amenities and living conditions in rural areas.

On the political front, the minister criticized some nationalist political parties, alleging that they had resisted several major development projects, including the Hub Industrial Zone, China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), Gwadar Port, Gishkore Dam and the South Balochistan Package.

UK appreciates Pakistan's anti-terror efforts

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi and British Minister of State for Security Dan Jarvis on Friday agreed to expand cooperation between Pakistan and the United Kingdom in seven key areas, including counterterrorism, anti-narcotics, NADRA, cybercrime, immigration, coast guards and training programmes. British Minister of State for Security Dan Jarvis visited the Ministry of Interior, where he met Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi and Minister of State for Interior Talal Chaudhry.

The two sides also held delegation-level talks to discuss bilateral cooperation in security-related matters.

During the meeting, both countries agreed to strengthen cooperation in counterterrorism, drug control, cybercrime, immigration, identity management through NADRA, coast guard operations and training programmes.

Pakistan urges Sudan, South Sudan to resume dialogue

UNITED NATIONS, (APP): Pakistan has reaffirmed its strong support for the UN Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA), underscoring the importance of sustained diplomatic engagement between Sudan and South Sudan for a peaceful and mutually acceptable resolution of the final status of Abyei — the disputed area along the border between the two countries.

Commending UNISFA for implementing their mandate "under exceptionally difficult circumstances", Ambassador Syed Haider Shah, permanent representative of Pakistan to the UN, said in his maiden statement to the Security Council on Wednesday, noting the fragile situation in Abyei, due to intercommunal tensions and the presence of unauthorized armed actors.

The Mission, in this context, remains an "indispensable stabilizing presence", the Pakistani envoy said, pointing to a decline in security incidents and a peaceful migration season — with as many as 600 Pakistani peacekeepers contributing to such efforts.

UNISFA was established by the 15-member Council in June 2011 following the outbreak of violence in the resource-rich border area claimed by both countries. Its mandate is due to expire on 15 November.

At the outset of the discussion, the UN Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations, Jean-Pierre Lacroix, briefed the Council on the situation in the Abyei Area and the mandate

Transparency in public spending must be ensured: PAC

QUETTA, (VoM Report): The Balochistan Assembly's Public Accounts Committee (PAC) has raised serious questions over audit findings involving irregular expenditure of more than Rs12.11 billion in the Communication and Works (C&W) Department, directing officials to provide financial records, recover questioned payments and ensure greater accountability in the use of public funds.

PAC Chairman Asghar Ali Tareen, who presided over the committee's meeting at the Balochistan Assembly, ordered the recovery of over Rs130 million identified in two audit observations and instructed the department to furnish relevant documents for further examination. The committee reviewed the department's financial position for 2022-23 and noted that it had been allocated more than Rs44.42 billion, of which over Rs41.18 billion was utilized, leaving upwards of Rs3.24 billion unspent.Members questioned why substantial funds remained unused despite extensive development requirements across the province. They observed that allocations unlikely to be utilized should be surrendered in time so that the resources could be redirected towards other priority schemes. Discussing audit paragraph 4.2.1, officials informed the committee about excess payments amounting to Rs90.34 million in various building divisions during 2021-22 and 2022-23. The payments reportedly involved rates exceeding approved limits as well as differences in construction quantities.

Quality education essential for Balochistan's socio-economic progress: Chief Secretary

QUETTA, (VoM Report): Balochistan Chief Secretary Shakil Qadir Khan has stressed that quality education is essential for the province's socio-economic progress, directing authorities to expedite the construction of Daanish Schools and complete all related arrangements so classes can commence without unnecessary delay.

He chaired a high-level meeting to review the progress of Daanish School projects and examined the pace of construction at seven locations across the province.

The chief secretary instructed officials to accelerate development work while ensuring that prescribed quality standards and project timelines were strictly observed.

Shakil Qadir Khan also directed the authorities to initiate the recruitment process for teachers and support personnel alongside construction activities.

CM Bugti announces medical, financial; livelihood support for needy citizens

QUETTA, (VoM Report): Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti has reiterated his government's resolve to support deserving citizens facing health and financial challenges, assuring a visually impaired man of assistance for possible treatment abroad while extending livelihood support to his unemployed companion.

During a meeting with Quetta resident Muhammad Zahid, the chief minister provided financial assistance and assured him that the provincial government would facilitate his medical treatment if specialists found a possibility of restoring his eyesight.

Bugti said arrangements could be made for treatment in London, the United States, Dubai or any other country, depending on medical advice and the availability of an appropriate procedure.

The chief minister also extended support to Zahid's unemployed friend, Jan Muhammad, presenting him with a rickshaw to enable him to establish a source of income and become financially self-reliant.

He stressed that physical disability should not deprive anyone of dignity, equal opportunity or the ability to earn a livelihood.

He said assistance for medical care, rehabilitation and sustainable employment was an important responsibility of the government towards vulnerable segments of society. "Serving humanity is the greatest service, and bringing a smile to the face of someone facing hardship gives me immense satisfaction," Bugti said.

He maintained that the government must remain responsive to citizens during difficult circumstances and work to ensure that economically disadvantaged people could access healthcare, employment and other essential services.

The chief minister said particular attention would be given to individuals struggling with financial difficulties or disabilities so they could live with dignity and greater independence.

Speaking during the meeting, Muhammad Zahid thanked the chief minister for the assistance, recalling that he had earlier received Rs1 million in financial support for his medical treatment as well as assistance aimed at improving his livelihood.



QUETTA: Parliamentary Secretary for Excise and Taxation Mir Muhammad Khan Lehri meeting with Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti.

Sustainable peace essential for development in Balochistan: Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail

QUETTA (ANN): Supreme Court Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail has expressed serious concern over the deteriorating law and order situation in Balochistan, describing the prevailing circumstances as deeply distressing and calling for collective efforts to understand and address the causes of unrest.

Speaking at a dinner hosted by the Balochistan Bar Council, Justice Mandokhail reflected on the significant changes in the province's security environment, recalling a time when he could travel across Balochistan without requiring security personnel.

He said the situation had changed considerably, noting that he was now advised to exercise caution even while travelling to Quetta.

Justice Mandokhail stressed that the responsibility for restoring lasting peace could not rest with the government alone. He urged citizens and other stakeholders to examine the underlying factors contributing to instability and play their part in efforts aimed at bringing normalcy back to the province.

He observed that peace and security were fundamental to economic activity and social progress, while a stable environment was also essential for citizens to approach courts and pursue justice without fear or apprehension.

The judge called for a broader and collective approach to restoring peace, emphasizing that sustained stability was vital for protecting citizens' rights and creating conditions conducive to development and prosperity in Balochistan.



ISLAMABAD: British Minister of State for Security Dan Jarvis meeting with Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi

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Burnham surprised everyone

British Prime Minister Andy Burnham surprised everyone – including many of his Cabinet colleagues – when, in his speech to the Labour Party's annual conference, he unexpectedly reopened the question of the UK's relationship with the EU.

Brexit, he declared, had "done more harm than good," and, if we wanted to "restore a higher level of growth and prosperity," then we needed a "clear path … into the rest of the century." Accordingly, he continued, he would soon "take the opportunity … to lay out to the country what … the different options are" after which he would "see if we could find consensus around one which will give us clarity about our position, and the future of the continent we live in."

In so doing, Burnham broke a taboo that has, since 2016, effectively condemned the majority of the UK's center-left politicians to going no further than promising, just as his predecessor Keir Starmer did, to "make Brexit work" – largely out of fear of appearing to want to renege on what Leave campaigners still insist on calling the "will of the people" as expressed in the 2016 referendum.

That Burnham's words did not trigger a backlash amongst "the people" (or, tellingly perhaps, a detailed defense of Brexit's benefits by its advocates) is testament to the fact that a majority of Brits have, since early in 2021, been telling pollsters that the decision the country came to 10 years ago was the wrong one. Currently, some 57% of voters, including 23% of those who voted Leave, agree, while some 55% say they want to rejoin the EU. And Burnham's decision arguably makes even more electoral sense when one realizes that around eight out of 10 voters whose support he needs for Labour (or else to vote tactically at the next election so as to keep the Conservatives and Reform UK out of office) support rejoining the EU. Just as importantly, his intervention makes economic sense. Indeed, it is likely that the research suggesting Brexit has done severe damage to the UK's trade, growth and public finances is (along with this shift in public opinion and the concern that the USA is no longer such a reliable ally) one of the main reasons why Burnham has, after just 10 weeks in the job, concluded that more has to be done to reverse or at least further mitigate the colossal act of self-harm that Brexit constituted.

Under Starmer, the Labour government was pursuing a series of incremental moves to reduce the trade friction created by the UK's departure. But no economist thinks that this strategy – much like the various trade deals the UK signed with other countries under the Conservatives – will add much more than a fraction of a percent to its GDP. In truth, the only move that will make more than a marginal difference will be joining not just the customs union but the single market too. Yet to do that without going the whole hog and rejoining would mean the UK becoming, in the jargon, a "rule-taker" – something such a large economy with a particularly deep attachment to its sovereignty would probably find it impossible to accept both in principle and in practice.

The smart money is on Burnham inserting into Labour's next election manifesto a commitment not to rejoin per se but to opening negotiations on a new, closer relationship with the EU, with any deal that might be arrived at being subject to a referendum.

Winning such a vote, however, is far from a racing certainty, especially if it were to involve full membership. That is because the current member states would almost certainly refuse to grant the UK most of the opt-outs and the budget rebate that it enjoyed before it formally left in 2020 – and current polling suggests that support for rejoining among the British electorate drops significantly once they are presented with that scenario.

Moreover, this assumes that every EU member state (and, under the rules, it really would have to be every member state) would welcome the UK back into the fold, and that cannot be guaranteed.

For one thing, European governments will worry about the possibility that any decision on the part of the UK to rejoin could be reversed by a future Eurosceptic government. For another, any deal would need to be negotiated with an EU whose largest members, France and Germany, might at that stage be run by two far-right parties (the French RN and the German AfD) whose affection for and affinity with Britain are, to say the least, questionable. Against that, we should remember that Britain is still a relatively rich middle power with an outsized diplomatic and defense presence. And the positive reaction to Burnham's opening gambit by France's current president, Emmanuel Macron, is a reminder that many European politicians and publics would, whatever the obstacles negotiations might throw up, be happy to see the UK finally admitting to itself that, in an increasingly unstable economic and geopolitical environment, being inside the EU is the safest place to be.

Geopolitics' inflection point

IMRAN MALIK

Geopolitics, in all its manifestations, is now in a state of severe flux. It has reached a critical inflection point where pure, gentle diplomacy is being brusquely replaced by the application of ruthless power, undaunted military force and blatant coercion in interstate relationships. The change, though slow to start with, has now acquired a malign, overbearing momentum of its own. A callous use of brute, overwhelming force to secure national interests and objectives is fast becoming the new normal in regional and global geopolitics. Morals and ethics, in all their definitions, avatars and incarnations, appear to have been sacrificed at the altar of national interests. Portentously, militarily and economically powerful states now tend to dismiss international law, its writ and reach, with downright contempt and disdain. International organisations like the UNO, UNESCO, ICC, etc. have not only been belittled, berated, criticised and starved of funds but also accused of being wasteful and ineffective. The rule of international law has been scornfully derided. The writ of the ICC has been circumscribed and its judgements disregarded. The hubris that emanates from this vile, misplaced megalomania now defines the dynamics of brutal power in interstate relationships as well as the domestic politics/policies of an increasing number of states. The US (currently Venezuela, Iran); Israel (genocide in Gaza, West Bank, Lebanon, Syria); India (Pakistan, Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu & Kashmir Region — IIOJK&R); and a few others are the main exponents of this horrendous, malignant malaise.

Severely brutalised geopolitics will henceforth define most interstate relationships.

Apparently, it was PM Netanyahu's hysteria and paranoia over a possibly nuclear-armed Iran which compelled President Trump to initiate this war. A critical look at its grand strategic design is, however, warranted. Deeper, more profound strategic objectives seem to lurk beneath the surface as well. At the grand strategic level, apart from Iran, China and its booming economy appear to be crucial targets too. A virtual stranglehold on China's supply chain of oil, and thus its economy, could help contain its mercurial rise and multifarious challenges to US global pre-eminence and exceptionalism. China imports oil from all across the globe, taking care that no source provides it with more than 20% of its requirements. Its supply chain of energy, oil and gas is spread from the Middle East (ME), to Russia/ Eurasia (17.4%), Latin America, Africa and so on. The ME provides anywhere between 31–50% of its oil imports, depending upon the geopolitical situation at any given point in time. KSA provides 14% of its oil requirements, while in 2025, Iran, on average, exported 1.38 million barrels of oil per day to it. This amounted to 80–90% of Iran's seaborne oil exports. China imported roughly between 389,000 and 470,000 barrels of oil per day from Venezuela, which came to about 3–5% of its total seaborne imports.

In a deep strategic manoeuvre that preceded the Gulf War, the US kidnapped Venezuela's erstwhile President and later coerced its government into a one-hundred-year, lop-sided deal, literally acquiring total control over its oil wealth. Consequently, the supply of Venezuelan oil to China dwindled to almost zero! Furthermore, the closure/near closure of the Hormuz Straits and Bab el Mandab waterways/choke points has disrupted China's supply chains of oil from the ME too. This makes for a crucial double jeopardy for China, with serious implications for its economy and strategic oil reserves as well. Was targeting China's economy, through such an indirect approach, an intended, albeit undeclared, strategic objective of this war too?

At the regional level, the Gulf Arab states and Iran have had their exports of oil and gas seriously curtailed by the disruption of the SLOC/usual trade routes through the Hormuz Straits and the Bab el Mandab. This has critically truncated their oil and gas exports to the world, especially China, and seriously weakened their economies too. President Trump claims to have eliminated Iran's nuclear programme and its related infrastructure in totality. However, there seems to be no incontrovertible proof to that effect. Iran has borne the brunt of the US-Israel Combine's assault and continues to stand tall, defiant and unyielding. Israel is no longer considered the uncontested, overwhelming military power and domineering, fearsome hegemon of the region.

The US has failed to defeat Iran militarily, coerce it economically or cripple it through widespread isolation in the diplomatic arena either. In his speech at the UNGA, President Trump spoke of three main options that he was considering, two of which bordered on the diabolical: one, making a deal with Iran; two, annihilating it completely; three, "driving it to hell with no chances of survival". Were these mere statements, a part of his relentless rhetoric on the war, or could these threats be truly manifested? If so, then how? Could these be interpreted as subtle indicators of the imminent/ future use of non-conventional/nuclear weapons? Is the US-Israel Combine now running out of viable options at the conventional level to bring this war to an acceptable closure? Does the US now feel compelled to ratchet up the escalation ladder and resort to non-conventional means and measures, not used in anger since World War 2? If so, then does it imply that all efforts at diplomacy and mediation have failed and that there are no other non-violent, non-lethal options left or available? Have all other options been tried and found wanting? Has the strategic environment deteriorated to the extent that the employment of non-conventional means has become inevitable? Nuclear weapons are generally not considered war-fighting tools. They are supposed to deter war and, vitally, preserve peace. If the US-Israel Combine considers employing non-conventional means an operational necessity, then how is it likely to be operationalised? A shot across the bow or absolute, unadulterated Armageddon?

The term "shot across the bow" is derived from the naval practice of firing a cannon shot ahead of an adversary's ship to force it to stop, change course or submit itself to the firing ship's diktat. It is a proactive coercive measure. This term has been borrowed for use in nuclear strategy, where it refers to a deliberate, low-casualty, low-yield or non-lethal use of a nuclear weapon. It demonstrates political resolve, will and the requisite capacities, capabilities and competencies to deter further aggression, without triggering an all-out nuclear exchange/war. However, it also reflects a willingness to go right up the escalation ladder to full-scale nuclear war if an adversary refuses to yield. This may generally apply to cases where both belligerents are nuclear powers. However, if the aggressor is the only nuclear power in the conflict, the core objectives become distinct: one, restore deterrence. Shock the adversary into halting its conventional or strategic aggression by demonstrating the political and military will to cross nuclear thresholds; two, escalation control. To signal that the nation does not seek a full nuclear exchange but will not back down either; three, communication. Send an unambiguous message of unrelenting political resolve and will when all other options, moral, diplomatic, economic and conventional military, have failed. However, where the immediate capitulation of a resolute, unyielding belligerent is required, it may be used against it even though it may not possess nuclear weapons. The nuclear strikes on Hiroshima and Nagasaki during World War II literally unleashed Armageddon upon them/ Japan. These civilian population centres were ruthlessly obliterated without any warnings/ shots across the bow!

The shot across the bow could be manifested in different ways. It could be a High-Altitude Detonation over an ocean, desert or the upper atmosphere (to generate an Electromagnetic Pulse, EMP) without causing direct casualties. It could also be a Remote Military Target, such as an isolated outpost in an unpopulated area, a naval fleet at sea or a strictly battlefield/ strategic asset. (The Pickaxe Mountains in Iran?). It could also be the employment of a single, low-yield Tactical Nuclear Warhead, rather than a high-yield strategic weapon. In certain circumstances, it could even be carried out in one's own territory, a desert or other unpopulated area, to demonstrate one's capabilities, resolve and will to cross the Rubicon, if needed!

Hermann Kahn, in his famous 44-rung Escalation Ladder, gives a conceptual framework to describe how a minor political conflict can gradually/rapidly escalate into an all-out thermonuclear war, threatening widespread annihilation of mankind. It can be summarised into three stages: one, an intense conventional conflict that does not give decisive victory to either belligerent; two, either belligerent resorts to a shot across the bow; three, panic ensues, a miscalculation occurs and an all-out strategic war breaks out! The risks of a shot across the bow are undeniable. It could lead to involuntary escalation, full-scale nuclear war and cause unlimited environmental and collateral damage. On the other hand, if successful, it could obviate further aggression, avoid total destruction of a country and yet preserve the credibility of nuclear deterrence.

Presently, however, the US-Israel Combine finds itself in a dire strategic cul-de-sac. In sheer desperation, it has been compelled to threaten Iran with annihilation, perhaps through non-conventional means/weapons. Iran is likely to remain unperturbed. Critically, under no circumstances should President Trump become a victim of his own fiery rhetoric or PM Netanyahu's unrelenting harangues and allow the strategic environment to so deteriorate that a resort to non-conventional means becomes inescapable. Furthermore, a major development with phenomenal strategic implications may already be afoot in the Persian Gulf. The US is moving out of Iraq, and this may be interpreted by other Gulf Arab states as a precursor to the US' eventual, total egress from the region, too. They are duly worried. This war has failed spectacularly to achieve any of its strategic objectives. No regime change has taken place. On the contrary, Iran has defied all odds and denied the US-Israel Combine any modicum of victory: military, economic, diplomatic or even moral. The Gulf Arab states now look furtively at an emboldened Iran (potential regional hegemon?) with de facto control over the Hormuz Straits and the Bab el Mandab and, by implication, over their economies. The US cannot possibly egress the region without resolving this emerging, potentially explosive economic imbroglio of its own making. Therefore, it becomes imperative for it to bring this war to a mutually acceptable closure and resolve the issue peacefully. Veiled threats to employ non-conventional means must never be operationalised. Period. The world, and in particular the ME, can ill-afford the after-effects of nuclear strikes/explosions. The collateral damage to Iran's neighbours (including Pakistan), to regional and global economies and their supply chains of oil and gas, to the environment and peace will be colossal, unbearable, even irreversible. Furthermore, such rhetoric alone, much less a practical manifestation of it, might give alarming ideas/options to paranoid, irrational, high-strung, extreme right-wing leaders like PM Netanyahu in the ME and PM Modi in South Asia, potentially spelling disaster for all humanity! Sanity needs to prevail. The US-Israel Combine and Iran must come to a viable, swift, mutually agreeable closure to the war. Diplomacy must replace abrasive rhetoric and any devastating escalation of the war. Both belligerents must step back. The mediation and diplomatic approach must be reinforced with China joining the current mediators, Pakistan and Qatar. They must not only help prevent further war in the Persian Gulf region but also create and preserve peace, progress and prosperity therein!

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Consciously apolitical

SALEEM QAMAR BUTT

The relationship between the soldier and the state forms the bedrock of national sovereignty. Across civilisations, the primary purpose of an armed force has been to shield a nation's geography and core values from external and internal threats. However, Pakistan, being the first Islamic ideological state, is confronted with multiple internal and external threats hitting at its ideological base. The armed forces took it upon themselves to simultaneously protect the ideological frontiers of the state, which, unfortunately, more often than not resulted in military takeovers. Nevertheless, while guarding the state with deeper sincerity, filled with the precious sweat and blood of ghazis and shaheeds, "the imperative of political neutrality in uniform" has never before been more critical. To achieve this, men in uniform must master a crucial paradox: they must remain unconsciously politically aware, while remaining consciously apolitical. Understanding the political environment is essential for a soldier, to comprehend the geopolitical canvas, the nature of modern hybrid warfare and the intent behind strategic commands. However, acting politically – taking sides, meddling in civil governance or expressing factional bias – fractures military discipline and destroys public trust. As the adage warns, "A house divided against itself cannot stand." When a military shifts its gaze inward to the political arena, it inevitably neglects the horizon where external threats loom.

In order to understand the cost of political entanglement, history provides stark examples of militaries that lost their primary focus by overstepping into governance. The Roman Praetorian Guard: originally established to protect the Roman commander, the Praetorian Guard quickly realised its leverage in civil politics. By assassinating emperors and auctioning off the throne to the highest bidder, they ushered in centuries of institutional corruption and political instability, ultimately hastening the collapse of the empire. The Ottoman Janissaries: once an elite fighting unit, the Janissaries gradually embedded themselves in palace politics, military trade guilds and policy-making. Their resistance to modernising military reforms – driven by political self-preservation – led to severe battlefield failures and their eventual violent eradication during the "Auspicious Incident" of 1826. The French military and the Dreyfus Affair: in late 19th-century France, political factionalism within the military leadership compromised justice, eroded public confidence and distracted the armed forces during a delicate period between major European conflicts. Conversely, the Prussian military theorist Carl von Clausewitz famously noted that "War is the continuation of politics by other means." And, of course, Pakistan has a lot to learn from a deeper, analytical and unbiased study of her own history, especially of 1958, 1968/69 and 1970/71, which resulted in the greatest debacle: the breakup of Pakistan. This formulation underscores that while military strategy serves political ends, the military instrument itself must remain subordinate to the state entity rather than becoming a partisan political actor. As the Latin phrase reminds us: Quis custodiet ipsos custodes? ("Who will watch the watchers?").

How to "conceptualise awareness versus action"? To safeguard a nation's territorial integrity (its borders, airspace and waters) and ideological boundaries (its founding philosophy, constitution and core national identity), military officers destined to reach higher ranks require a nuanced posture. First, "unconscious political awareness": an intuitive, professional grasp of global grand strategy, constitutional mandates, national interests and socioeconomic vulnerabilities. This ensures that commanders understand why they fight and how their operational and tactical choices ripple across international diplomacy. Second, "conscious apolitical conduct": at the most senior command level, a deliberate, disciplined refusal to engage in partisan rivalries, political endorsements, civil administration or ideological favouritism. It requires keeping the sword in its scabbard until summoned by legitimate constitutional authority. When soldiers step into the political arena, they risk becoming like "a sailor who abandons the wheel to argue over the ship's destination, while heading straight toward the reef." In the given milieu, what is the strategic imperative for the Pakistan armed forces? For them, maintaining this equilibrium is a matter of supreme national survival. Situated at a complex geopolitical crossroads – confronting conventional threats on its eastern border, asymmetric security challenges along its western frontier and the ongoing threat of hybrid warfare – Pakistan requires a military whose professional focus is absolute and undivided and, above all, which has wholehearted public support. To preserve its role as the ultimate shield of the nation, the armed forces should consider three core tenets: "strict subordination to the constitution", "professional specialisation over administrative involvement" and "preserving national cohesion". The military is one of the few national institutions that reflects the unity of Pakistan's diverse population. Remaining scrupulously apolitical ensures that every citizen – regardless of political, ethnic or regional affiliation – views the soldier in uniform as an unbiased national protector. By internalising political dynamics without participating in them, the Pakistan armed forces can ensure that their institutional focus remains fixed on guarding the nation's ideological and territorial borders and securing its sovereign future. The tendency of the fire-spitting incumbent spokesperson to tag political opponents as traitors, terrorists and separatists needs to be harnessed, and the hate-spreading monsters need to be leashed with a ban on money-making electronic media; they are all destroying the public's mental peace and tearing apart the fabric of national cohesion. The God-gifted and adroitly used opportunities on the external fronts, owing to the extraordinary regional security environment, must translate into geo-economic dividends for the people of Pakistan rather than mean political point-scoring or playing as a pawn on the global chessboard. Maintaining civil-military balance is one of the most critical challenges for democratic states. The institutional challenge requires keeping the military strong enough to protect the state, while ensuring it remains obedient to civilian leadership—a dynamic political scientist Samuel Huntington termed the "civilian control paradox". A few examples can just be pointed out here as to how, ultimately, a balanced system of governance comes to consolidate itself, ensuring that civil and military institutions function in their respective constitutional orbits. The first case is that of US President Truman vs MacArthur (1951). During the Korean War, General Douglas MacArthur—a national hero—publicly defied President Harry S. Truman's strategic policy, and the President relieved MacArthur of his command. The second case is from post-WWII West Germany, which needed to rebuild its military (the Bundeswehr) without resurrecting Prussian militarism or political independence. Reformers introduced Innere Führung (Internal Leadership), framing the soldier as a "Staatsbürger in Uniform" (Citizen in Uniform). The third example comes from Turkey's post-2000 reforms (dismantling the guardian military). For decades, the Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) operated as self-appointed guardians of secularism, conducting multiple direct and indirect coups (1960, 1971, 1980, 1997) via the powerful National Security Council (MGK). To resolve this issue, structural legislative reforms throughout the 2000s systematically reorganised the MGK.

Above notwithstanding, modern hybrid warfare—combining cyber operations, cognitive manipulation, and economic pressure with conventional threats—fundamentally destabilises traditional civil-military relations. Historically, the boundary was clear: politicians managed domestic governance and political discourse, while the armed forces managed external violence along defined physical borders. In the digital age, state and non-state adversaries deliberately target the cognitive domain (public perception and social cohesion) inside a nation's domestic sphere, blurring these institutional lines. That necessitates identification of key friction points in contemporary democracies. First is "The 'Domestic Battleground' Dilemma". Disinformation campaigns weaponise social media to exacerbate domestic political divisions, target electoral integrity, or undermine public trust in democratic institutions. Second is "The Boundary Strain"; when foreign adversaries launch cyber or information attacks against civilian targets (e.g., voting infrastructure, public opinion), civilians often lack the technical capability or speed to respond. If the military's cyber or intelligence arms intervene to counter domestic disinformation, they risk being accused of policing domestic political speech or surveilling their own citizens. The third and most relevant challenge is "The Politicisation of the Armed Forces as an Information Target"; adversaries deliberately run targeted psychological operations aimed at military personnel and veterans, attempting to erode command discipline or drag the military into partisan debates. To protect institutional readiness, military leadership may feel compelled to issue public communications or enforce strict digital behaviour standards. However, if military leaders publicly counter narrative attacks, political factions may accuse the military of taking sides in domestic political controversies. Deepfakes, automated botnets, and rapid cyber offensives operate at microsecond speeds compared to traditional diplomatic escalation. To counter hybrid threats without eroding civilian control, democracies are evolving new governance mechanisms, which need deliberation in Pakistan too.

Keeping in mind the political history of Pakistan as well as the current messy domestic front, my columns may seem a far cry to the sceptics. Nevertheless, bear in mind that "Only a fool learns from his own mistakes. The wise man learns from the mistakes of others"; could we just spare a few moments to revisit our national history from 1968–71? Pakistan's domestic political as well as internal and external security situation is too perilous. Pakistan Zindabad!

The writer is a retired senior army officer with experience in international relations, military diplomacy and analysis of geo-political and strategic security issues.

US, Greece announce $4 billion arms sales as defense ties deepen

ATHENS, (Agencies): The U.S. and Greece announced $4 billion in Foreign Military Sales on Wednesday to support Athens' long-term defense plans as the NATO allies moved to expand security and economic cooperation.
The announcement came after U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Greek Foreign Minister George Gerapetritis presided over the sixth U.S.-Greece Strategic Dialogue in Athens, according to a joint statement released by the U.S. State Department.
The two sides said the military sales would support Greece's defense plans and deepen interoperability, while they would also explore further cooperation between their defense industries, including in innovative technologies.
They also finalized Greece's participation in the U.S. National Guard Bureau's State Partnership Program with Florida and said interoperability would be enhanced through the provision of Stryker vehicles to Greece.
Washington and Athens, according to the statement, also agreed to expand law enforcement and counterterrorism cooperation and reiterated their commitment to addressing irregular migration.
On economic ties, the two countries pledged to strengthen trade and investment while cooperating on investment screening and the protection of critical infrastructure procurement.
They also highlighted cooperation in high-performance computing, cybersecurity and advanced technologies as well as energy ties involving the Vertical Gas Corridor and hydrocarbon exploration.
The two governments additionally extended their Cultural Property Agreement to protect cultural heritage and combat illicit trafficking networks.


Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis speaks with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio and U.S. Ambassador to Greece Kimberly Guilfoyle during an expanded meeting at the Maximos Mansion in Athens, Greece.


Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan (R) shakes hands with Hungarian Foreign Minister Anita Orban in Ankara, Turkiye.

Putin to attend CIS leaders'; Caspian environmental summits

MOSCOW, (Agencies): Russian President Vladimir Putin arrived in Turkmenistan on Thursday for a two-day visit, where he will take part in a leaders' summit of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and a Caspian Sea environmental summit.
Putin's arrival at Turkmenbashi International Airport, situated near the Avaza National Tourist Zone, where the Central Asian nation is hosting both events, was broadcast by Russian state media.
The Russian president was greeted by numerous officials upon his arrival, including Turkmen Foreign Minister Rashid Meredov.
According to a Kremlin statement on Wednesday, the CIS Heads of State Council meeting will review the results of cooperation within the organization, outline priorities for further joint efforts, and provide an exchange of views on current international and regional matters.

Turkiye rules out ops against Houthis, vows to help Saudi defense

ANKARA, (Agencies): Speaking at a joint news conference with visiting Hungarian Foreign Minister Anita Orban on Thursday in Ankara, Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan said Türkiye was considering defense assistance to Saudi Arabia amid tensions with the Houthis in Yemen. He was answering questions about the Mecca Joint Defense Alliance, which was signed by Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. "This is a defense pact, not a pact of offense; Türkiye won't send troops to another country for attacking another," he said.
He also noted that the agreement on the alliance would soon be sent to Parliament for ratification.
Fidan and Defense Minister Yaªar Güler joined Pakistani officials in Saudi Arabia's Riyadh on Oct. 5 for the Strategic Political and Defense Committee of the alliance. This second meeting of the alliance after its inauguration in Istanbul was followed by a blunt statement underlining the collective defense and a pledge of military assistance to Saudi Arabia amid attacks by the Houthis.
"The Mecca agreement is a defense agreement; it is not an agreement of offense. If one country that is a party to the agreement is attacked, you are required to stand with it for the defense," he stressed.
"Türkiye will not send soldiers to another country for an assault. We are forming a defense cooperation with Saudi Arabia. We are discussing what type of defense measures are needed through our military delegations, and how Pakistan can contribute. Saudi Arabia already has a major military infrastructure; they have a high amount of weapons, munitions and defense elements accumulated over the years," Fidan said.
The Turkish opposition also claimed that Türkiye would not be able to send troops to Saudi Arabia as the agreement on the alliance was not ratified by Parliament yet. Fidan responded to this and said that they had completed the work to send it to Parliament. "We presented it to the president on Wednesday and decided to send it to Parliament as soon as possible," he stated.
Sabah newspaper reported on Wednesday that Türkiye would provide low- and medium-altitude aerial defense systems to Saudi Arabia along with assistance in drone technologies and electronic warfare. The newspaper also reported that Saudi Arabia was working on setting up a base for Türkiye.
A Foreign Ministry official told Daily Sabah that the Saudi side conveyed "some expectations" to Türkiye and they would examine those. The move is the most concrete step since the agreement was signed in August by top officials of Türkiye, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia to showcase the impact of the alliance in the broader region.
As civil war in Yemen flared up this summer, the Houthis spread it to Saudi Arabia, prompting the central government in Yemen to launch an all-out operation against the group this week. Saudi Arabia's oil and military installations are among the main targets of the Houthis.

Iran sends Hezbollah $200M for Lebanon war aid

BEIRUT, (Agencies): Iran has provided Hezbollah with $200 million to support Lebanese families displaced by this year's war with Israel, two people with direct knowledge of the transfer said, marking the group's first major aid effort for supporters hit hardest by the conflict.
Hezbollah received the funds last month despite mounting U.S. economic pressure on Iran and growing obstacles to moving money to Tehran's Lebanese ally, the sources said.
Intermediaries handling the transfer charged a 20% fee because of the risks involved in dealing with Hezbollah, according to the sources. One said the rate was four times the usual fee.
A Hezbollah official, asked for comment, confirmed that funds had been secured and said a distribution plan would be announced in the coming days, but did not identify the source of the money.
Iran's Foreign Ministry, its permanent mission in Geneva, the U.S. Treasury Department and the Lebanese government did not immediately respond to requests for comment.
Israel's bombardment and ground offensive in Lebanon displaced hundreds of thousands of people, many from Hezbollah's Shiite support base, after the Iran-backed group entered the regional conflict on March 2.
Hezbollah, founded with support from Iran's Revolutionary Guards in 1982, has suffered heavy Israeli blows during two wars since 2024. The United States designates the group as a terrorist organization.
Many of those displaced have received little or no assistance from Hezbollah so far.
Hezbollah plans to use the funds to provide an initial $3,000 payment to each eligible family, with priority given to people whose villages have been destroyed or remain inaccessible because of Israeli occupation, the sources said.
About 50,000 families fall into those categories, according to one of the sources.
Iran has continued supporting Hezbollah despite years of U.S. sanctions. Tehran transferred $1 billion to the group during the first 10 months of 2025, according to the U.S. Treasury Department.
Tehran has not publicly acknowledged financing Hezbollah. Iran's support for allied armed groups across the region has previously fueled domestic criticism, making the issue particularly sensitive as economic hardship deepens inside the country.
Iran had pledged additional funding for Hezbollah after Tehran reached an interim agreement with Washington in June that allowed it to sell oil. The agreement collapsed in July. Washington has since intensified economic pressure on Tehran, tightening sanctions and imposing a naval blockade aimed at restricting Iranian oil exports. Hezbollah leader Naim Qassem said last month that the group would soon contribute to a project to house thousands of people displaced by the war, using "available resources and donations." He did not provide further details.
Hezbollah's ability to finance social services and postwar assistance has helped sustain support for the group in the past. After its 2006 war with Israel, Hezbollah quickly distributed cash to affected families and helped rebuild Beirut's southern suburbs, one of its main strongholds. This time, however, reconstruction has been slow. Lebanese Prime Minister Nawaf Salam said last month that rebuilding after the two wars since 2024 could cost more than $27 billion.


MOSCOW: Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova addressing the media during a press briefing.

Russia says possible deployment of additional NATO troops in Baltics would be escalation

MOSCOW, (Agencies): Russia said Thursday it views the potential deployment of additional NATO troops in the Baltic states as an escalation.
"We unequivocally view the potential deployment of additional NATO contingents – including US troops – and the establishment of corresponding military infrastructure in the Baltic states as an escalation," Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova told journalists.
Zakharova said such plans, which she claimed are "harbored by the Washington administration," run counter to its stated aim of "fostering diplomatic and political avenues to de-escalate tensions in Europe." "All these confrontational moves align with the North Atlantic Alliance's plans for the accelerated militarization of Russia's western border regions under the false pretext – as we have already discussed today – of a so-called threat from the East," Zakharova said. She reiterated that Russia has no plans for an armed conflict with Western Europe, noting that Russian President Vladimir Putin and Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov have repeatedly made such statements.
"One might ask those who voice such things – or those who can at least explain what they mean – how they justify these fantasies. What do they cite as the goals, objectives, or reasons for the actions they fabricate?" Zakharova said. She also accused the EU of embarking on a "path of confrontation" with Russia, arguing that this path would "only exacerbate Europe's problems."


BERLIN: Palestinian associations organized a pro-Palestine demonstration in the square at the intersection of Zimmer and Friedrich streets.

TENDER NOTICE

TSE-2627111221303 Only electronic bid will be submitted, No physical bid is required. Note: In All Procurements of GOB Whether Through Electronic or Manual Bid Submission, It is Mandatory For All Bidders to Get Registered At Electronic Public Procurement System of BPPRA GOB. The ASSISTANT DIRECTOR LOCAL GOVT BARKHAN invites bids from Eligible Bidders for execution of following works for the Year 2026 based on Composite schedule rates 2023 on Percentage Rates

Tender Fee PKR and Bid Security 3%

S.No	Name of Work/s	E/Cost
1	WSS MARKAZI MASJID MOHALA FARAZ KHAN PAHARI PSDP No. 3446, WSS RAHEEM MATH JAKHAR PSDP NO. 3509, WSS NOOR AHMED DAHAM PAGHRA PSDP NO. 3510 DISTRICT BARKHAN	45,000,000

Procurements shall be made under the Balochistan Public Procurement Rules – 2014. **Eligibility of Bidders:** Presence in Active Tax Payer List The bidding firm must not be blacklisted by any procuring agency of Pakistan Balochistan Revenue Authority Registration is required The bidder must have completed 1 Assignment of similar nature of work Turn over of at least 31,500,000 PKR Amount in2 subsequent previous years showing financial capacity of the firm Registration with Pakistan Engineering council (PEC) C-5 and above (Upto 65 million)In Relevant Category And Specialized Code is CE09 , EE11(i) (Solar), EE11(iii) (Solar Energy system), EE11(viii) (Wind and Solar Energy), EE11(vi) (Solar Installation). The bidder shall provide an affidavit that they are/ have been not envolved in any kind of litigation with any procuring agency. The bidder shall provide a comprehensive yet workable Methodology of work that includes physical, financial activities targets (complete in all respect). The bidder shall provide a credit line certificate issued by a scheduled bank showing unconditional availability of credit line at least 80% of the project cost. The bidder shall attach call deposit receipt (3%) as mentioned in NIT. The bidder must have completed 1 Assignment of 90% of Estimated cost of the project in Last two years, which is online verifiable. The bidder must have completed 1 Assignment of 80% of Estimated cost of the project in Last two years, which is online verifiable. (By Similar Nature we Mean Drilling of bore along Solar System Installation) **Procedure Of Procurement:** Single Stage Two Envelope Bidding Procedure **Bid Security:** The bids must accompany Bid Security in the form of Bank Gurantee,Deposit at Call of 3 % specified above in the name of the under-signed from a scheduled bank. **Tender Documents:** The NIT & Bidding Document can be obtained electronically from www.bppra.gob.pk **Issuance of tender Documents:** Complete Bidding Document can be viewed at www.bppra.gob.pk **Last Date of bid submission:** Bid can only be submitted electronically latest by 23 November, 2026till 10:00 AM through supplier dashboard. **Tender opening:** All tenders will be opened on same day at 11:00 AM on EPPS System Address: Office of the Assistant Director local Government District Barkhan Balochistan Phone no: 3315838933 Email: muhammaddur270@gmail.com

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Lebanese Foreign Minister Youssef Rajji in a meeting with EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas in Beirut.

Lebanon looks to EU support for state control of weapons, end to Israeli occupation

BEIRUT, (Agencies): Lebanon said it is counting on EU support for its decision to place all weapons under state control and efforts to end Israel's occupation of Lebanese territory.
"Lebanon has taken a clear sovereign decision to place weapons and the use of force exclusively in the hands of the state throughout its territory," Lebanese Foreign Minister Youssef Rajji said during a joint news conference with EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas in Beirut.
He described the move as essential to restoring sovereignty, consolidating stability and rebuilding strong and capable state institutions.
"We count on the European Union continuing to stand by Lebanon and its legitimate institutions to achieve this national objective," he said.
"We also count on its support to end the continuing Israeli occupation of Lebanese territory and ensure the full implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1701."
Rajji also welcomed European support for Lebanon's state institutions, including the Lebanese army and Internal Security Forces.
"We want Europe to be an essential partner in this new phase, not only in helping Lebanon manage its crises, but also in overcoming them," he added.

Venezuela's Maduro, wife to face new US charges over alleged torture

WASHINGTON, (Agencies): Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro and his wife, Cilia Flores, who were abducted by U.S. agents, are expected to face new criminal charges in the U.S. over the alleged torture of Americans detained in Venezuela, a U.S. official said Wednesday. The new charges could come as


soon as Thursday, according to the official, who was briefed on the investigation. Maduro and Flores were captured by the U.S. military from their homes in Caracas on Jan. 3 and brought to New York to face drug trafficking charges. They have pleaded not guilty. A spokesperson for the Manhattan U.S. Attorney's office, which brought the charges, declined to comment.

Pakistan's youth can play vital role in global employment market: Gilani

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani on Friday called for greater international promotion of Pakistan's traditional products, cultural heritage and skilled workforce to expand the country's exports, trade and global economic engagement.

He expressed these views while addressing the inaugural ceremony of the New York Chamber of Small Business Corporation's office in Lahore.

Gilani congratulated the chamber's management on the inauguration and appreciated the initiative to strengthen business links and promote Pakistan's commercial presence internationally.

He said Pakistan had enormous potential in traditional products and skilled human resources that could be introduced to international markets.

He highlighted traditional crafts, including embroidery, blue pottery, ceramics, khussa, Sindhi Ajrak and the Ajrak of the Saraiki region.

He said these products reflected Pakistan's rich cultural identity and offered significant opportunities for exports and international branding.

Gilani particularly highlighted the potential of Ajrak-based garments, including shirts, saying other countries had successfully promoted their traditional textiles in international markets.

Referring to Multan as one of the world's oldest continuously inhabited cities, with a history spanning more than 5,000 years, he said its cultural heritage deserved greater international recognition.

He compared the city's historical significance with that of Damascus.

He said Multan's blue pottery, ceramics and traditional craftsmanship should be promoted more widely in international markets. The chairman also stressed the need to develop a skilled workforce capable of meeting international market demands. He said Pakistan's youth could play an important role in the global employment market, particularly in fields requiring technical, professional and software-related skills.

Effective skills development and greater international exposure, he added, could create opportunities for young Pakistanis to work abroad and contribute to the country's economy.

Gilani also called for greater engagement with Pakistani communities and business associations abroad, particularly in the United States. He said these communities had established strong professional networks and made significant contributions in various fields. He said these connections could help promote Pakistani products, facilitate trade and project a positive image of the country internationally. The chairman acknowledged the contributions of the Association of Physicians of Pakistani Descent of North America (APPNA), particularly its work in healthcare, medical education, research and humanitarian services.



Pakistan and Tajikistan army troops participate in Dosti-III counter terrorism exercise at special operations school in Cherat.


ISLAMABAD: Deputy Chairman Senate Syedaal Khan Nasir in a meeting with former Chief Minister of Punjab and senior Pakistan Muslim League (N) leader Muhammad Hamza Shehbaz Sharif

Canada reaffirms support for Pakistan's polio eradication efforts

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Canada has reaffirmed its longstanding support for Pakistan's efforts to eradicate polio, continuing a partnership spanning nearly four decades as the country launches its November vaccination campaign targeting more than 24 million children.

Canadian High Commissioner to Pakistan Tarik Ali Khan joined representatives of the World Health Organization (WHO), UNICEF Pakistan and the Pakistan Polio Eradication Initiative to meet frontline polio workers and community members and acknowledge their contributions to the nationwide immunisation drive. During the engagement, the importance of frontline workers and community participation in reaching every child with polio vaccine was highlighted.

The November campaign is being conducted in 97 selected districts across the country, with more than 200,000 frontline workers participating in efforts to protect children under five years of age against the crippling disease.

PTI failed to address basic problems of people: Muqam

HARIPUR, (APP): Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs, Gilgit-Baltistan and SAFRON and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa President Engineer Ameer Muqam here Friday said that thousands of people took to the streets to celebrate the end of the PTI government, reaffirming their support for peace and rejected the party's false narrative.

"The world has witnessed how our armed forces inflicted a humiliating defeat on the enemy during Maraka Haq," he said while addressing a public gathering in Haripur on Friday.

Addressing the gathering, Engineer Ameer Muqam thanked the people for their overwhelming participation, saying thousands had turned up despite receiving only one day's notice.

He said people had remained frustrated during the PTI government and celebrated its ouster by taking to the streets in Peshawar, Swat, Battagram and Shangla. The federal minister said that despite remaining in power in the province for nearly 13 and a half years, the PTI had failed to address the basic problems of the people or put the province on the path of development. Similarly, during PTI four-year tenure at the Centre, the party had pushed the country into economic and political difficulties.

He said the massive public gathering had sent a clear message that people were fed up with politics of confrontation, protests, long marches and personal interests.

PM committed to Balochistan's development, prosperity: Syedaal

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Deputy Chairman Senate Syedaal Khan Nasir Friday said that Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif is deeply committed to the development and prosperity of Balochistan and the elimination of backwardness from the province, and is taking practical steps towards achieving this objective.

During a meeting with former Chief Minister of Punjab and senior Pakistan Muslim League (N) leader Muhammad Hamza Shehbaz Sharif at the Prime Minister's House, he observed that Balochistan possesses enormous economic potential in the form of natural resources, mineral reserves and agricultural opportunities, which, if effectively utilised, could transform its economic landscape and improve the living standards of its people.

The overall political situation, national and parliamentary affairs, development of Balochistan, economic challenges, employment opportunities for the youth and various government initiatives aimed at national prosperity came under discussion.

The Deputy Chairman Senate paid tribute to Hamza Shehbaz Sharif for his political contributions, public service and longstanding commitment to democratic and parliamentary politics.

He appreciated his experience and services during his tenure as Chief Minister of Punjab and expressed confidence that his newly entrusted responsibility at the federal level would further strengthen coordination between the government, parliamentarians and political stakeholders, contributing towards effective governance and resolution of public issues.

The Deputy Chairman Senate appreciated the initiatives being undertaken by Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif for the development of Balochistan, stating that these measures reflected the government's commitment to providing the province with equal opportunities for progress.

He particularly highlighted the establishment of Danish Schools in various districts of Balochistan, describing it as an important step towards providing quality education to children from underprivileged and remote areas.

He said that these institutions would help bridge educational disparities, empower the younger generation and enable them to play a meaningful role in national development.

Highlighting the importance of agriculture in Balochistan's economy, Syedaal Khan Nasir appreciated the provincial government's initiatives for the welfare of farmers, particularly the Green Tractor Scheme introduced with a 50 per cent subsidy to facilitate farmers and promote agricultural mechanisation.

He also recalled Federal and Provincial Government's initiative for Balochistan's farmer's welfare in past.

He said that these initiatives reflected the government's commitment to strengthening the agricultural sector, improving productivity and supporting rural livelihoods.

He observed that such measures were contributing towards economic stability and creating better opportunities for the farming community.

The Deputy Chairman Senate also appreciated the Federal Government's recent initiatives to create employment opportunities for the youth of Balochistan through dedicated recruitment opportunities and provincial quota-based vacancies in federal institutions.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Ahsan Iqbal addressing a Media Dialogue on "Media Literacy and Development Journalism".

Pakistan needs to learn from int'l education models: Ahsan Iqbal

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal on Friday directed the preparation of comprehensive proposals for restructuring Islamabad's education sector, including the establishment of an autonomous education authority, with a 60-day timeline for legislation and a transition roadmap.

Chairing a meeting of the Joint Committee on ICT Education Reforms, the minister said the Prime Minister had directed the preparation of an accelerated and actionable reform plan to improve governance and the quality of education in Islamabad.

He emphasised that the proposed autonomous education authority should have a Board of Governors (BoG) with an independent majority and a Chief Executive Officer selected on merit, supported by clearly defined functions, powers and terms of reference.

He directed the relevant authorities to prepare the required legislation and transition roadmap within 60 days, ensuring that the Federal Directorate of Education (FDE) continued its operations without interruption during the transition.

The minister stressed that the proposed authority should enjoy greater administrative and operational autonomy, with a clear mandate covering all education providers across Islamabad.

He observed that despite substantial government investment and higher employee-related expenditure, public-sector schools were not delivering results commensurate with available resources.

Approximately 77 per cent of the FDE's expenditure ceiling was employee-related, highlighting the need to improve institutional performance and ensure value for public money.

Referring to the proposed recruitment of 1,100 teachers through the Federal Public Service Commission (FPSC),

Ahsan Iqbal called for reviewing the recruitment process and exploring a contractual hiring model to attract highly qualified and talented young professionals.


TURBAT: Provincial Minister Mir Zahoor Ahmed Buledi in a meeting with Deputy Commissioner Kech Yasir Iqbal Dashti

Danyal for responsible journalism, timely govt communication

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Federal Parliamentary Secretary for Information and Broadcasting Barrister Danyal Chaudhry stressed the need for timely, credible and verifiable information to safeguard public trust and informed decision making, as he chaired a panel discussion on information integrity at a national dialogue organised in Islamabad by UNESCO Office Pakistan in collaboration with the Press Information Department (PID), Centre for Peace and Development Initiatives (CPDI) and National Forum of Information Commissioners (NFIC).

Speaking at the panel titled "The Value of Information Integrity: Trust, Journalism and Resilience", held as part of the dialogue on "Access to Information for Enhancing Information Integrity," Danyal said the rapid expansion of social media, digital platforms and artificial intelligence had transformed access to information while creating new risks from misinformation, disinformation and AI generated content.

He called for stronger responsible journalism, timely government communication, greater media literacy and ethical use of artificial intelligence to protect the public from false and misleading narratives.

The parliamentary secretary said information integrity is a shared responsibility of the government, parliament, media, civil society, academia, technology platforms and citizens.

Barrister stressed that credible information must reach the public promptly, warning that delays and information gaps could create space for misinformation and false narratives to gain ground.

Danyal appreciated UNESCO, PID, CPDI and NFIC for convening the dialogue, saying closer cooperation among key stakeholders is essential to building a more credible, transparent and resilient information ecosystem in Pakistan.


FRANCE: Ambassador Mumtaz Zahra Baloch participates as a guest of honour at a conference on women in global diplomacy organized by Zonta Club International.

Over 22.1 mln children vaccinated during first four days

ISLAMABAD, (APP): More than 22.1 million children have been vaccinated against polio during the first four days of the ongoing sub-national immunisation campaign being conducted in 97 selected districts across the country, the National Emergency Operations Centre (NEOC) said on Friday.

The fifth day of the campaign is underway, with vaccination activities continuing uninterrupted until November 8.

Approximately 24 million children under five years of age are being targeted during the campaign, which is being carried out with the participation of more than 200,000 frontline polio workers. According to the NEOC, the campaign is being conducted simultaneously in Pakistan and Afghanistan to strengthen regional efforts against the crippling disease and prevent the transmission of poliovirus across borders.

Provincial and regional vaccination figures showed that 8.535 million children had received polio drops in 13 selected districts of Punjab, while more than 6.382 million children were vaccinated in 20 selected districts of Sindh.

Similarly, over 4.429 million children were vaccinated in 27 selected districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), while 2.008 million children received polio drops in 31 selected districts of Balochistan.

In Islamabad, more than 450,000 children were vaccinated, while approximately 160,000 children received polio drops in three selected districts of Gilgit-Baltistan (GB). In Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), around 192,000 children were vaccinated in two selected districts during the first four days of the campaign.

The NEOC warned that the threat of poliovirus persisted across the country and stressed that polio was an incurable disease, with vaccination remaining the only effective way to protect children against lifelong disability.

Rubina Khalid for stronger climate-resilient social protection

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Chairperson Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) Senator Rubina Khalid called for stronger international support to protect vulnerable communities from climate and economic shocks, highlighting Pakistan's experience of linking social protection with skills, employment and climate resilience.

Addressing a panel at the Asian Development Bank (ADB) Adaptive Social Protection Forum in Manila, she said Pakistan contributes very little to global carbon emissions, yet its vulnerable communities bear a disproportionate burden of climate change. "The international community must step up support for Pakistan's most vulnerable families by strengthening climate resilience, expanding adaptive social protection and providing practical assistance to help communities withstand future climate shocks," she said.

Senator Rubina Khalid highlighted BISP's response to climate-related emergencies, saying 2.7 million families affected by the 2022 floods received PKR 70 billion in emergency cash assistance.

She said BISP's National Socio-Economic Registry (NSER) covers more than 40 million households and has been made dynamic, with climate-related questions incorporated into the survey to identify households exposed to climate risks.


ISTANBUL: Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan addresses the closing session of the 42nd COMCEC Ministerial Meeting on behalf of OIC Member States, emphasizing stronger economic cooperation, enhanced trade financing, increased intra-OIC trade and collective efforts for sustainable development.

SC upholds confiscation of truck used for smuggling

ISLAMABAD, (APP): The Supreme Court has upheld the permanent confiscation of a Hino Mazda truck used for transporting smuggled goods, ruling that the vehicle cannot be released merely on payment of a fine when such relief is barred under Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) restrictions.

A three-member bench headed by Chief Justice Yahya Afridi, comprising Justice Muhammad Shafi Siddiqui and Justice Mian Gul Hassan Aurangzeb, accepted an appeal by Customs authorities and set aside the decisions of the Peshawar High Court and Customs Appellate Tribunal.

According to the three-page order authored by Justice Muhammad Shafi Siddiqui, the truck (registration No. TKK-500) was intercepted at JCP Tunnel in Kohat on February 16, 2025, and foreign-made spare parts were recovered from it. The driver failed to produce documents establishing the legal import of the goods.

Customs authorities confiscated the goods under Section 168 and the vehicle under Section 157(2) of the Customs Act, 1969. The confiscation was upheld by the competent authority and Collector Customs (Appeals).

However, the Customs Appellate Tribunal subsequently allowed release of the truck against payment of a fine equivalent to 40 per cent of its assessed value. The Peshawar High Court also dismissed the Customs authorities' challenge to that decision.

The Supreme Court observed that the option of releasing confiscated goods or vehicles against a fine under Section 181 of the Customs Act was subject to restrictions imposed by the FBR. Under its notification dated June 13, 2009, certain vehicles used for transporting smuggled goods were not eligible for release against a fine.

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